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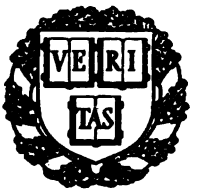

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

William Wordsworth.

from the drawing by W. Shuter. April 1798

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

BY GEORGE McLEAN HARPER

[illegible] PRINCETON UNIVERSITY [illegible]

[illegible] AND A "LIFE OF [illegible]"

"A man of uncommon genius is a man of high passions [illegible] design."—WILLIAM GODWIN

VOL. I.

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

597-599 FIFTH AVENUE

1916

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BY GEORGE McLEAN HARPER

PROFESSOR IN PRINCETON UNIVERSITY; AUTHOR OF "MASTERS OF FRENCH LITERATURE" AND A "LIFE OF CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE"

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TO

MY DEAR WIFE

WHO HAS SHARED THE JOYS AND TOIL OF

THIS WORK

PREFACE

LOVE of Wordsworth's poetry, and a feeling that its appeal to others might be increased if the facts of his life and the extent of his connection with the Revolutionary movement were more fully set forth, led me, more than ten years ago, to undertake this work. His first biographer, the Bishop of Lincoln, who was his nephew, presented to the world a very inadequate portrait, in which the romantic and insubordinate youth of the poet was overlaid with the decorous and only mildly interesting features of his old age. The mere physical proportions of the Bishop's "Memoirs" show what an opportunity he lost. Nearly two-thirds of that work was devoted to the poet's later years, when his personal and literary adventures were at an end, and he had given up his gallant struggle on behalf of equality and simplicity. Only eight pages, for example, in a total of about one thousand, dealt with what was by far the most momentous period of the poet's life—namely, his residence in France. There were reasons for this reticence—theological, political, and domestic reasons—which influenced the Bishop, but may be now disregarded.

Unfortunately, Professor Knight, in his voluminous "Life," was affected by the same restrictions, and his work follows, in general, the same scheme of values as the "Memoirs." Nothing could be more injurious to the spread of that affection and respect for Wordsworth which are greatly to be desired, than to give disproportionate prominence to anecdotes connected with his old age, when his fame was almost equalled by his want of

tact, and when one of the purposes dearest to his heart was to disparage the social ideals of his early manhood. Of Professor Émile Legouis's perfect book, "La Jeunesse de Wordsworth," I can speak only in terms of the deepest admiration. His assurance that he did not intend to continue it encouraged me to complete my work. "La Jeunesse de Wordsworth," moreover, is rather a critical essay than a biography, even for the period it covers, though, indeed, its biographical elements are fresh and well chosen.

I have had particularly in mind, as possible beneficiaries of my work, the large class of persons who have a certain acquaintance with Wordsworth's poetry, but have shut their minds against the richer blessings of his influence for one or more of the following reasons: His personality for them does not exist; he loses the advantage possessed by Burns, for example, and Byron, who are distinct human figures. Or they think they are acquainted with his personality, and mean by "Wordsworth" the sage of Rydal Mount, the "Daddy Wordsworth" of Edward Fitzgerald, a man absorbed in the contemplation of flowers and domestic animals, satisfied to put into verse the accepted philosophy of his age and country, and quite incapable of affecting, or, indeed, of being deeply affected by, the political issues of his time. To think thus of Wordsworth is, of course, ignorant and presumptuous, but it is common. By some he is regarded with complacency as a pious defender of the faith; by some as the voice of English patriotism launching invectives against Napoleon and furnishing apt quotations for a modern instance. I wish to do what I can to replace these narrow views with the image of a very great poet, and to give an idea of what that means; to show him as a youth inspired with faith that he was called to a divine mission, as a young man burning with zeal for his fellow-men and with the fire of a generous philosophy, daring much, enduring much, renouncing much, for the sake of his

beliefs; as a mature man vainly striving, as all men do, to reconcile worldly success with high ideals, and attaining meanwhile consummate technical skill and critical authority; as an old man prematurely broken by the violence of his feelings, then as ever, under all the graces of his nature, a hard block of human granite. And especially I wish to show that he had a right, based on personal experience and conviction, to represent and interpret the Revolution. We are struck with the "coincidence" that he, who was destined to be the imaginative critic of the Revolution, was born in 1770, just in time to be nineteen years old at the fall of the Bastille. It is more logical to think that if there had been no uprising in France there would have been no Wordsworth, no English poet capable of making an imperishable record of such an event. Instead of being remote from public life, he was, with the single exception of Milton, the most political of all our great poets.

I now come to the pleasantest part of my long task, the expression of indebtedness and gratitude to those who have helped me. And first I recall with reverence the sunny mornings of a happy childhood when my mother trained me to memorize Wordsworth's poems, and instilled into my heart a love for his name. It was, I believe, at the suggestion of my wife, and largely because of her love for Wordsworth, that I undertook to write this book. In hours of discouragement she has held me to my task, and at all times her help has proved invaluable. To M. Legouis I am grateful, not only for his book—which is beyond praise, and has established a new standard in English biography (for it has been perfectly translated)—but for many valuable suggestions made to me in private. Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, the poet's grandson, has generously placed at my disposal much unprinted material, has allowed me to examine the manuscripts of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals, and has assisted me in matters of interpretation as well as in matters of fact. He and Mr. Frank E.

Marshall have permitted me to copy and print Dorothy Wordsworth's letters to Jane Pollard, Mr. Marshall's grandmother, which are in Mr. Marshall's possession. Mr. Wordsworth has also given me permission to print hitherto unpublished letters and parts of letters from his grandfather, which are now in the British Museum and Dr. Williams's Library. To Professor Knight and Messrs. Ginn and Co. I am indebted for permission to quote extensively from " Letters of the Wordsworth Family." Professor Knight's edition of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals has also been of assistance. I am very grateful to Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, not only for permission to quote from his invaluable edition of his grandfather's letters and from " Anima Poetæ," but for some precious personal reminiscences and family traditions. Mr. E. V. Lucas has kindly consented to my quoting from letters in his noble edition of the " Works of Charles and Mary Lamb." To the most accurate of Wordsworthians, Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, editor of the Oxford " Wordsworth," I wish to express my homage for his self-sacrificing work and my thanks for his assistance in several difficulties. It gives me great pleasure to express my gratitude to Miss Arnold of Fox How, and Mrs. Tyson of Rydal, for personal recollections and items of local interest; to the late Henry J. Roby of Lancrigg, who honoured me with his encouragement; to Dr. Elmer Johnson, of Wolfenbüttel, and my friend the Rev. Ambrose W. Vernon, of Brookline, Massachusetts, who at my request made difficult researches at Goslar; to M. A. Trouëssart and M. P. Dufay of Blois, and the librarian of Orleans; to Professor George Herbert Palmer, of Harvard, who lent me several extremely valuable first editions of Wordsworth and Coleridge; to Professor Lane Cooper of Cornell; to the staff of the Princeton University Library, and a former member of that staff, Professor W. H. Clemons, of the University of Nanking; to Professor Arthur Lovejoy, of the Johns Hopkins University; to Mr. Herford, of Dr. Williams's Library,

London, for assistance in consulting the Crabb Robinson manuscripts; and to Miss Mary White, for permitting me to read the correspondence on Wordsworth between Mr. Thomas Hutchinson and her father, the late W. Hale White. A portion of the passage on Rousseau, Godwin, and Wordsworth originally appeared as an article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, and some of the matter about Wordsworth at Blois I contributed in the first instance to the New York *Nation*.

G. M. H.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,
July 9, 1915.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	vii
I.	THE PERMANENCE OF WORDSWORTH	1
II.	ORIGINS AND CHILDHOOD	18
III.	CAMBRIDGE AND THE NORTH	54
IV.	THE OPEN ROAD	89
V.	LONDON—ADRIFT	105
VI.	INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU	122
VII.	IN REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE	135
VIII.	BEAUPUY AND BLOIS	161
IX.	A REVOLUTIONIST IN ENGLAND	182
X.	PHILANTHROPIC PLANS	223
XI.	THE GODWIN CIRCLE	251
XII.	DOROTHY	273
XIII.	COLERIDGE	302
XIV.	THREE PERSONS AND ONE SOUL	330
XV.	"LYRICAL BALLADS"	351
XVI.	GRASMERE AND THE LAKES	385
XVII.	WORDSWORTH THE CRITIC	413

ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOL. I

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM THE SHUTER DRAWING (*Photogravure*) - - - - - *Frontispiece*

PAGE

THE HOUSE IN WHICH WORDSWORTH WAS BORN *To face* 28

DAME TYSON'S COTTAGE, HAWKSHEAD - - - „ 72

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM ORLEANS - - - „ 146

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, FROM THE HANCOCK DRAWING „ 296

RACEDOWN - - - - - - - 301

ALFOXDEN - - - - - - - 350

THE GOSLAR HOUSE - - - - *To face* 366

DOVE COTTAGE, FROM THE FRONT - - - „ 394

FACSIMILE OF PAGE IN DOROTHY'S JOURNAL - - „ 406

SKETCH-MAP

THE WORDSWORTH COUNTRY - - - - *To face* 1

Penrith
dal

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

HIS LIFE, WORKS, AND INFLUENCE

CHAPTER I

THE PERMANENCE OF WORDSWORTH

WORDSWORTH is more widely read and more often quoted than any other English poet, except Shakespeare and Milton. He is therefore a power in the world. Countless thousands of English-speaking men and women have died and been forgotten. The influence of every one of them lives, no doubt, and will live for ever, but only a few survive by name and with some degree of fulness. His mind and heart, his view of life as a whole, his most delicate perceptions, his innermost feelings, are still a part of the spiritual world in which we move, and there is every likelihood that what we may call his personality will continue to exist for many generations.

I can imagine the ghosts of great discoverers, conquerors, and statesmen, complaining among the shades that they are forgotten in the upper world, while poets continue to walk in the sunshine of human gratitude, and are as real a thousand years after death as when they moved on earth. "Men of action," as they called themselves, they wonder why, not to them, but to poets, should be given "the name that honoureth most and most endureth." A little reflection on the haunting love of companionship which dwells in every soul would furnish an answer. The poets give us themselves. They have the simplicity to suppose that we will care for their confidences. And they possess an art of communication which is so pleasing to our senses

that, almost for its sake alone, we should be willing to listen.

The first question we must ask, then, in estimating the qualities of Wordsworth's poetry, which may be expected to give it permanence, concerns his possession of artistic mastery. And it is certainly not overbold to say that in perfection and range of technical skill he is unsurpassed. Taking into account the whole of his poetry, and not merely the best or the most well-known part of it, one is impressed with the correctness, the vigour, the ingenuity, and the variety, of his versification. He has attempted all things, accomplished all things. He is rich in metrical forms. He has, if not exhausted, at least more nearly drained than any other poet, the treasury of English rhymes and rhythms. His devices for entrapping the eye and ear are endless, and are the more subtly effective as they seldom obtrude themselves upon our attention, which he always occupies with something beyond the music and the form. Two examples, chosen almost at random, may suffice to show both his natural felicity and his painstaking artifice:

Dark on my road the autumnal evening fell,

in an inconspicuous passage of "The Excursion," is a line so simple that we might well fail to realize how perfect it is, how complete, how musically effective. We feel the largeness and weight of night closing down upon the scene, but the poet's process escapes attention; we take for granted that he wrote this line without conscious effort. On the other hand, there was, from 1814 to 1849, a line of the same poem,

And no vain mirror glittered on the walls,

which he changed in the last year of his life to

And no vain mirror glittered upon the walls,

with the evident intention of producing a tinkle and patter of syllables to express the frivolity, the inconstant flashing, required by the context.

His diction, too, and syntax are of vast range and singular exactness. He keeps, as regards the gram-

matical elements of style, strictly to the sound English tradition. To an uncommon extent his language is free from learned affectations and ephemeral fashions. It is not encumbered with Latinisms as is the language of Milton, or with Gallicisms as the language of Pope, or with whimsical and short-lived words such as make half the difficulty in reading the Elizabethans, or with inkhorn terms and crude borrowings from recondite specialities, which mark for neglect the works of many a poet, from Ben Jonson to Browning. He was an observant and purposeful student of our elder poets, of Chaucer and Spenser and Shakespeare, of Drayton and Daniel and Milton, of Dryden and Collins and Gray. His is pure English and undefiled. With only the very smallest allowance for exceptions, we may say that his language would have passed current at any time in the last three hundred and fifty years. This is some guarantee of its future acceptance. In the main it is not charged with a temporal alloy, is not the product of a " movement " or a " period," is neither Classical nor Romantic, is no more Georgian than Victorian, is not a revival, is not local, is not exotic, is not pedantic. Particular gratitude is due to him for not overloading his works with references to ancient mythology.

In one respect, at least, the quality of Wordsworth's thought matches the breadth of his style. His mind was excessively masculine; yet through almost lifelong association with gifted women, and a peculiar dependence upon womanly sympathy, his natural asperity became tempered with feminine tenderness, and his disposition to generalize was balanced by a feminine interest in particulars. Still, he is the most philosophical of all our great poets; he dwells in a region of ideas, which he endeavours to correlate to the sum of human experience. In all things, animate or inanimate, he perceives a spiritual life. The strength of this perception and the faith with which he tries to impart it to other minds make him a seer and prophet. Yet he neither repels a simple-hearted reader by setting up a system, nor creates distrust by professing to enjoy a

mystical illumination. There is a moral of some sort in almost all his poems. He professes, with good reason, to be a teacher. His passages of abstract reasoning sometimes tire all but the most sound-winded followers.

On the other hand, except Dante, no poet capable of sustaining such flights is more rich in concrete detail. Things in themselves interest him, apart from their possible connection with the mind of man or their share in the great soul of nature. He enjoys them and finds it worth while to describe them, for the sake of their inherent attractiveness, quite apart from their ulterior significance. Whether he would have subscribed to the statement that the external world is a symbol of the Infinite Idea, I very much doubt. There were moments when he said so; but when he is most himself he is most content with nature as reality and not symbol. He never taught that nature existed as an object-lesson. He did not, in his prime, habitually think of nature as leading up to God; he thought of nature as having the Life of Life abiding in her. With reverence, then, as well as curiosity and delight, did he note her features. Until his powers and his courage for independent vision had begun to fail, he did not accept the view, so paralyzing to the pursuit and enjoyment of knowledge, that it is impious to study nature except as we behold in her a warning or a stage to an inconceivable life beyond. He dealt with this goodly frame more worthily, accepting the " joy in widest commonalty spread."

But if a great poet owes his place among his peers to qualities of style and thought that are traditionally acceptable, there may yet be room in him for peculiarities of a local, temporary, or personal kind. Indeed, if he is to win a life of his own in our affections he must possess these. Otherwise, to establish his generality he would have stripped himself of the traits which give to every human being a something all his own. There is much in Wordsworth's versification, language, choice of subjects, and mode of thought, that belongs to him alone; much, also, that belongs to his age; and not a little that is local. He experimented boldly, and was deeply

moved by sympathies which made him willing to risk the disapproval of even very excellent judges. His peculiarities have at different times and for various reasons repelled readers. At first there was the complaint that his characters and diction were "low." Then a certain class objected that his philosophy was unorthodox, that it was materialistic, or at least pantheistic. Later it was discovered that it was mystical and out of touch with an age of reason and science. The style of his longer works has by some been deemed too vague and ecstatic; by others, hard and uninspired. Notwithstanding the wide scope and general applicability of his works, he is still mentioned now and then as "one of the Lake poets." He is likewise known as a poet for children, though perhaps more commonly as the poet best fitted to console the afflicted, restore the erring, and comfort the aged.

After all, it is greatly to Wordsworth's advantage that there is a certain amount of truth in every one of these limited views. They prove that he is not to be disposed of in a formula. They show how immensely varied his excellence is, how wide his appeal, how he transcends and embraces the special domains of almost all English poets who were his contemporaries. Some of the features of his work that were once peculiar to him, or to him and Coleridge, have now in large measure become elements in the method of all poets, in every land. In any case, his idiosyncrasies enrich the sum of his value by giving personal colour to his pages and saving them from that featureless perfection which we acknowledge languidly in Racine, for example, and Lamartine and Schiller. It is precisely and solely on this account that Milton's grotesque polemical sonnets are indispensable: they add a touch of umber to the colours in his portrait. We could not spare them. But this is an extreme instance; in Wordsworth's case the peculiarities are for the most part really admirable in themselves. It is an enrichment of his art that the great interpreter of universal nature should have known every foot of ground in one or two narrow valleys; for

the whole being the sum of all its parts, not to know intimately at least one part disables the judgment of a philosopher, and how much more the insight of a poet! Wordsworth studied with what seemed a petty curiosity certain individuals, preferably simple souls, in an effort to divine their motives and resources. He has been foolishly blamed for taking so much interest in paupers, idiots, weak old men, and quite ordinary children. His justification blazes forth in many a hundred lines of high political wisdom. He found his way, through the least defended approaches, to the inner recesses of human character. He became like a little child or like a poor beggar, and learned what man is. With the knowledge thus acquired of human needs and passions, he was able to understand, better even than Byron or Shelley, the effect of the French Revolution upon the feelings and conduct of men in all classes of society.

Of course, even a sound and vigorous style would not suffice to win and hold for any poet a position such as Wordsworth's. There must also be an altogether uncommon weight of character, intensity of emotional force, and reach of intellect. To note and estimate these is the special task of biography. In Wordsworth's case we have to take into account not only poetry, but several prose compositions, which deal with subjects so diverse as politics and the principles of æsthetics. His opinions, whenever he gives definite expression to them, are found to be rooted in some principle below the surface. They are original in that they are a part of his very self. He utters them grudgingly, as if loath to part with what has been so long cherished. Even when they concern matters of seeming indifference, or upon which, at least, no momentous consequences appear to hang, they are so personal to him, and have been so long pondered by him, that they carry some of the heat and passion of his soul. That they do not cohere in a system is due to the fact that his life, if reckoned by convictions and feelings, was broken in the middle. Up to a certain point he was guided by hope; later he was driven by fear. The two halves of his life are incongruous.

The extent of the difference has never been fully appreciated, because it is not so perceptible in his poetry as it is in his letters and the reports of his conversation that have come down to us. A careful study, not only of what he said and wrote, but of what others said and wrote to him and about him, makes it quite clear that in the second half of his life he cursed what he once blessed, and blessed what he once cursed. The transition was fairly rapid, and it was complete. Moreover, it affected his poetry, affected not merely the subjects he chose and the general direction in which he turned his thoughts and feelings, but even the choice of words and the structure of his verse. As I believe that Wordsworth has influenced the tone of English and American thought, for the last seventy or eighty years, more than any other poet who lived in the nineteenth century, I have found much dramatic interest in the play and counter-play of two contending forces operating in him. In either period, considered by itself, there is essential unity; his conduct, his doctrine, and the works of his imagination, are consistent with one another. But the Wordsworth of 1816 is a different man from the Wordsworth of 1800. Since it is that later man whom we find represented in a dozen portraits and innumerable anecdotes, and not often to his advantage, the earlier and far more attractive Wordsworth is almost entirely obscured. There is, to be sure, less material for getting acquainted with that fiery and adventurous youth, now dead for more than a century, than with the famous old man who died in 1850 and was known to a few persons who are still living.

Investigation of those earlier years is all the more thrilling because, while some of them are revealed to us with remarkable fulness in his sister's letters and journals and in the poet's own works and those of Coleridge, and show him in a light as attractive as it is clear, other periods, of many months' duration, are shrouded in mystery. An additional touch of romance is imparted by the presence of that sister, herself a genius, full of originality and charm, and by the friend-

ship of both these wayward spirits with Coleridge, a community of mind unique in human story. These "three persons and one soul" represent the fine flower of English literary culture in the eighteenth century, and the beginning of much that was most distinctive and valuable in the nineteenth. When they wandered together, heart in heart, "on sunny Quantock's airy ridge," or held high converse in the bare little cottage at Grasmere, they were moulding, in no small degree, the intellectual destiny of future generations, establishing a fresh style in poetry, and especially creating a new and vitalizing sense of the relation between poetry and life.

Poetry was to be no longer regarded as a merely decorative art. It was to spring more than ever from experience and to bear more than ever upon conduct. It was to be less academic and exclusive, and by becoming simpler in form was to appeal to a larger audience. Yet the broadening-down has been accomplished without recourse to vulgarizing methods. No one can say that Wordsworth's influence has had the effect of blunting the poetical sensibilities of our race. On the contrary, while poetry and every art associated with poetry have through his efforts become more popular, they have also attained superior delicacy. New powers of perception have been awakened, and exquisite workings of emotion have been for the first time recognized. Humanity at large has been found immensely more interesting and important than even the choicest selection from its more favoured classes. In nature herself, contemplated with a wider glance and a freer curiosity, many objects previously unregarded or even despised have been found to possess fine moral and æsthetic values. Like many another experiment in democracy, in which, after much delay, hesitation, and prophesying of evil, it has been decided to open to profane feet some ancient preserve of opportunity and enjoyment, this appeal to wider circles has been amply justified by results. Strange as it may at first seem, the fact is that in proportion as poetry has become less

aristocratic it has become more refined, and that by being universalized it has become more sacred. We require from poets a stricter warrant of heaven-given authority than our forefathers in the eighteenth century insisted upon. We are less easily contented with talent and clever workmanship, or even with mere intellectual power and emotional violence. Wordsworth taught us to expect that a poet should be a dedicated spirit, obliged by a sense of his calling and enabled by his genius to conceive of nature and of human life more worthily than other men.

A further reason for believing that Wordsworth will hold a permanent place in English literature is that still, after the lapse of two generations, he remains pre-eminent among our poets, from the fourteenth century to the twentieth, for the truth of his report about nature. None of his successors has equalled him in this. In his own phrase, he wrote " with his eye on the object." From the beginning, this has not been the practice of poets nearly so much as is often supposed. Some of the most famous describers of nature in antiquity deceive us, very attractively to be sure, but yet deceive us, into crediting them with a knowledge of her which they either did not possess or did not permit themselves to exercise. The " Idyls " of Theocritus are the most exquisite and simple of all pastorals; yet his swains are not real Sicilian shepherds. Virgil in his " Eclogues," and even in the " Georgics," rarely shows more than a literary or imaginative acquaintance with details of rural life. For the language of the farm and village these poets substituted another, delightful in itself and possibly more memorable, but never caught from human lips. Euripides, in his descriptive passages, made a characteristically bold attempt to step outside tradition. But Dante alone, of all great descriptive poets before the time of Wordsworth, emancipated himself almost completely from the pleasant yoke of borrowed phrases, and subjected himself to the far more rigorous discipline of natural truth observed with his own eyes and ears. Nine-tenths of Shakespeare's descriptions

of what we call "out-door nature" will not bear the test which Wordsworth imposed upon himself; they are glorious borrowings. Milton describes with admirable delicacy of selection and wonderful artistic effect; yet he uses, probably, not more than half a dozen epithets that were original with him or suggested directly by objects he had examined. His terms are the common currency of poets. One by one the aptest and seemingly freshest of them have been traced to literary sources. If poets have, since Wordsworth's time, been striving, and with very gratifying success, to report more strictly of nature and in words unencumbered with conventional meaning, the credit is in large measure due to him. Poetry would have had small chance of holding its own in the nineteenth century except by establishing a strong claim to respect for an exactness of its own, comparable with the exactness of science. Wordsworth's poetry, in particular, has been enjoyed by men to whom no other kind of imaginative writing appeals. They have valued it for the natural way in which it rises to the loftiest flights from a firm basis in observation. Others, having regard to the end rather than the beginning, value his poetry none the less because it is from things plainly seen and intimately known that it ascends to what is beyond sight and beyond knowledge.

Wordsworth was not, of course, the only, or even the first poet, in his own age, who took a catholic view of nature and employed an unconventional language. Goethe, in his early and best years, had done both. Rousseau, though not technically a poet, had shown a new way to poets. Thomson had seen country life with his own eyes, and had sometimes described it in genuine terms. Cowper, with a mind freed by its own misfortunes from the ordinary literary ambition of his time, and not striving to shine, had gone farther and with less wavering than any of his predecessors in the path of simplicity and precision. Burns, whenever he wrote in the Scots language, happily forgot that he was a man of letters. And as Cowper was fortunately isolated by his melancholy, and Burns by his poverty,

so Blake, by the strange peculiarity of his genius, was kept aloof from tradition, and sang a new song. Crabbe, also, for the curious reason that he had a rather low opinion of poetry, and was more anxious to reach a large number of readers than to please the critics, did not have to endure the bondage of what was deemed good form. It has been customary to take for granted that we have here the stages of a literary movement; that an impulse flowed from Rousseau, through a series of personal contacts, till it reached and affected Wordsworth.

There is something to be said for this view. Rousseau set men thinking about the glories of equality as compared with the glamour of distinction. His teachings may be properly termed a religion, because they can be applied with transforming effect to every important sphere of conduct. If a man who accepted Rousseau's political and economic doctrines happened to be a poet, his very diction would soon show what had taken place; for the doctrines all grew from one central idea, the equality of men. Though but one, it was capable of infinite expansion and subdivision. Being a religious idea, it permeated the whole being of him who admitted it to his heart, giving new life to every member. That Cowper was a disciple of Jean-Jacques, his "Tyrocinium" shows most plainly, of course, though there is plenty of evidence in "The Task." On Burns the effect was produced, indirectly, through the general support which the French Revolution gave to his own manly view of society. Blake was immensely excited by the Revolution; the whole world, visible and invisible, past, present, and to come, good and evil, beautiful and hideous, ideal and practical, was summed up, to him, in two theodicies—the first as recorded in the Bible, the second as thundered forth in Revolutionary France.

In Wordsworth's case, writers have been led to false conclusions through ignorance of exact dates and facts in his life. His earliest poetry shows not the faintest appreciation of what Cowper and Burns had done.

Nothing could be less original, and the debt is due mainly to Thomson, Collins, Gray, Cowley, and Denham. Then came his actual presence in France in 1790, and again in 1791-1793, his actual study of Rousseau and French pamphleteers, and his personal acquaintance with active participants in the Revolution. At once his poetry showed the effect of these contacts.

In so far as he was affected by the example of Cowper or of Burns, it was at a much later stage of his development. His initial impulse towards simplicity was political, social, and moral, not literary. It was only when his heart had been profoundly moved, and certain convictions, having no necessary or at least no immediate connection with poetry, had been formed within him, that his style and method of writing began to change. He then immediately abandoned the standards which he had unquestioningly followed. All that he wrote before 1792 is conventional; all that he wrote between 1792 and 1797 is Revolutionary. In this second period he worked out and put in practice a theory of composition, which he thought fitting in one who had determined to obey the command, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." The attempt was heroic. It had something of the self-sacrificing recklessness of a forlorn hope. It was a gallant forward movement, but desperately lonely, and not likely to succeed unless reinforced. Coleridge brought up the needed support. Falling in with Wordsworth's advance, he strengthened it at a time when, through its own *élan*, it was in danger of wasting away. He added those elements which have been termed romantic, and interested Wordsworth, who till then was a severe realist, in legends of the wonderful. If Wordsworth could ever be termed a Romanticist, it was during the last three years of the eighteenth century. Originally and characteristically he was nothing of the sort. When he was most himself, he found sufficient inspiration in the natural world. Romanticism looked to the past, to the supernatural, to the extraordinary. Wordsworth, the true Wordsworth,

dwelt in the present, felt that nature was herself divine, and strove, with the zeal of a controversialist, and at considerable risk, to show that the ordinary is as wonderful and instructive as the exceptional.

It is in this sense that he was peculiarly the prophet of an age of science. What biologists and chemists have done to reveal the wonders of the physical world, he did, in a measure, for the relations between man's mind and the objects upon which the mind plays. This vast domain of perceptions and feelings he treated with something like the self-restraint, respect, and fidelity, with which men of science investigate the material universe. Nothing, he thought, was unworthy of regard. All things were so interesting, so justified in their existence and special working, that distinctions of high and low lost much of their meaning, just as mountains must appear of no peculiar significance to a man accustomed to use a powerful microscope. This state of mind in Wordsworth was a result of his conversion to the equalitarian creed of the French Revolution. Some sort of faith in human equality was the religion of that movement. Say what they will, neither the Carlyles nor the Taines can obscure this fact. And the doctrine being once accepted, it affected the very words he used.

But, after all, the first steps in his new spiritual life merely placed him, as a literary artist, on a plane with many older English poets, who wrote in a natural manner without having gone through a religious or political experience such as his. There have always been in English poetry two manners or methods. The one is natural, simple, free, and full of variety, the other artificial and much restricted. The former may on the whole be termed native, the latter exotic. Chaucer wrote in both manners; so did Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Jonson. In Shakespeare, for example, we are almost in doubt which to admire more—the description of Cleopatra's barge or the scene of her death, the former borrowed from Plutarch and enriched with rare jewels of speech, the latter possessing only the simple poignancy that might befit the passing of a beggar-girl

no less than of a queen. More extreme cases will occur to anyone. The preference will, in our time, generally be given to the scenes in which the plainest language is used. But this was not the opinion of educated persons in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. And, indeed, the academic manner easily justified itself when applied to the kinds of writing which required considerable education and social training in its readers, such as the epigram, the epitaph, the ode, and the satire. Even for lyrical, descriptive, and narrative poetry, it seemed appropriate enough when Milton used it; though it may be observed that his adoption of familiar language for "Samson Agonistes" shows that even he thought the academic manner unsuited for tragedy. How completely it held the field until near the end of the eighteenth century is proved not only by the great vogue of Waller, Dryden, and Pope, but by the immense quantity of official and perfunctory verse, all in this manner, by educated persons who were not by any means poets, and who chose, as a matter of course, the fashionable medium. It was the academic type because success in it—short of very great success—depended not upon the possession of genius—that is to say, inborn powers of eye and ear and mental association—but upon talents that could be cultivated.

In a vigorous upper rank, in which it was fashionable to send boys to classical schools, there was, of course, a tradition of learning and good taste, which could not fail to give point and elegance to verse if by any means the writing of verse became a favourite accomplishment. And though inspiration could not be commanded, wit, dignity, and grace, with no small amount of intellectual substance, distinguished even the second-rate poetry of the age. The academic type could not continue to prevail, however, for poetic genius in our race appears from time to time in men and women who are kept free from the bondage of fashion by their ignorance or their poverty or their loftiness of character. No force of literary convention could smooth out the peculiarities of Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, or Smart. In

truth, the older and stronger tradition was in the keeping of these eccentrics; and what has been called the New Poetry or the Romantic Movement was to a large extent the reappearance of a poetical manner that had been eclipsed for a season, its characteristic mark being a union of simple realism with occasional bursts of mystical strangeness. It admitted no limitations of diction and subject-matter.

But until Wordsworth and Coleridge were lifted on the ground-swell of the Revolution, they were satisfied with the fashion that prevailed in their youth. Their revolt was at first not literary, but political. Wordsworth, for example, continued to write in the academic manner when composing even those passages of "Descriptive Sketches," in 1792, which proclaimed his republican principles so vehemently that he afterwards felt constrained to suppress and alter them. However, since he respected his own genius, he was not long in changing his style to match his opinions.

Too much emphasis can hardly be laid upon the statement that Wordsworth at his best, in his great years, when he was most truly himself, when he was animated by courage and hope, was a fervent Revolutionist. His words were acts. His decisions, even in so quiet an affair as the choice of subjects and words for pastoral poems, were based on principles of the widest scope, and were in truth momentous, as he supposed. He breathed, with joy and awe, the spirit of a glorious time. And the time found in him its most faithful and inspired interpreter. He alone, of all who have experienced, or contemplated the Revolution, has left an adequate artistic record of its effect upon the spiritual life of those who welcomed it and those who opposed it.

The circumstances of his birth and early life had prepared him to embrace the Revolutionary doctrines and to fill worthily the office to which this acceptance committed him. It is probable that even the most reactionary man now living would be shocked, if he were to awake some morning in the last decade of the eighteenth century in England, by the oppressiveness of the social

atmosphere. The law favoured the owners of property, particularly landed property. It was still barbarously severe. The debtor, the poacher, the seditious person, were punished out of all proportion to their offences, while political corruption and vice in the upper classes were winked at. Not only was there no systematic provision for enabling the poor to get even an elementary education, but the very idea of their desiring an education was considered dangerous. Dissenters were excluded from the universities, and their participation in politics was restricted. Advancement for officers in the army and navy was purchasable, while the press-gang might at any moment snatch a poor man from his family and condemn him to the bitter lot of a common soldier or sailor. There was almost as much reason for a revolt in England as in pre-Revolutionary France. Wordsworth's boyhood was passed in a pleasant nook of English ground, where the contrast between the privileged classes and the body of the oppressed was not so violent as elsewhere. When he left it he was struck by the unhappy condition of his country. After his visit to France he found England still half choked, as he thought, with noxious fumes. He had breathed the exhilarating air of a country that had roused itself from even deadlier slumber. He came home with a new consciousness, a new outlook, and new aspirations. The contrast between what was and what he believed might be was presently deepened by the poverty and unrest occasioned by prolonged war. He himself, in the vicissitudes of his own life, was affected by both extremes of social difference. His family name and university education brought him into contact with persons of wealth and power, but the background of his memory was already filled with homely figures of poor, uneducated people, and his associations in the years before he became well known covered an unusually wide range in the social scale. He had to endure a certain share of prejudice, social as well as literary, and a certain amount of legal injustice, and he lived for some years on the verge of poverty. The sympathy which he

felt for those whose lot was different from his own was not purely imaginative, but was based on much real experience. A sense of social responsibility lay heavy upon him. He was never for a long time solitary, never contented with a make-believe world or a world of books.

His excellence as an artist, the special work he performed in renovating the spirit and the style of English poetry, and his pre-eminent position as interpreter of the Revolution, assure for Wordsworth an enduring place among the greatest of our poets. He acknowledged Milton as his master. That he equalled or perhaps surpassed Milton in the quality and variety of his best achievements may be the opinion of Wordsworthians, though it is hardly the judgment of mankind. But more and more the conviction is growing that he is the greatest of our poets since Milton. There is still another ground on which he is venerated. This is the belief that, more than any other eminent poet, in any language, he reveals a mystical relation between nature and the mind of man. It is quite possible that some of his admirers exaggerate the value of this revelation; but there can be no doubt that he endeavoured, with courage and originality, and from deep conviction, to establish as a religious principle what to all genuine poets is at least a sacred instinct.

CHAPTER II

ORIGINS AND CHILDHOOD

THE character and career of the poet Wordsworth suggest that he was of pure race long attached to one locality and fairly constant in a middle situation of life. His knowledge and love of the corner of the world where he was born were like hereditary instincts. They could scarcely have been derived from the experiences of a single lifetime. And he found ready access, by innate sympathy, to the emotional range of the humble and uneducated, no less than to that of the most privileged persons or the most extraordinary. In a short autobiographical sketch which he dictated in 1847, he says:

"I was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law, as lawyers of this class were then called, and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. My mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith, and of Dorothy, born Crackanthorp, of the ancient family of that name, who from the times of Edward III. had lived in Newbiggen Hall, Westmoreland. My grandfather was the first of the name of Wordsworth who came into Westmoreland, where he purchased the small estate of Sockbridge. He was descended from a family who had been settled at Peniston in Yorkshire, near the sources of the Don, probably before the Norman Conquest. Their names appear on different occasions in all the transactions, personal and public, connected with that parish; and I possess, through the kindness of Colonel Beaumont, an almery made in 1525, at the expense of a William Wordsworth, as is expressed in a Latin inscription carved upon it, which carries the pedigree of the family back four generations from himself."

Cockermouth is twenty-five miles west of Penrith. From both towns may be seen to the south the blue peaks of the Cumbrian Mountains, from whose farther skirts Penistone is but seventy miles distant. Within this small compass all the known ancestors of the poet spent their days, in farming, business, and professional life. Richard Wordsworth, his grandfather, married Mary, daughter of John Robinson, of Appleby, a village twelve miles south-east of Penrith.* Closer still to Penrith were the properties of Sockbridge and Newbiggin Hall. Richard Wordsworth is the first of the line of whom we possess extended information, although the name has been traced back to the middle of the sixteenth century in the parish of Silkston in Yorkshire. He came into Westmorland early in the eighteenth century, became superintendent of the Lowther estates, and was Receiver-General of the county at the time of the rising in 1745. He died about 1762.† His second son, John, the poet's father, born in 1741, became chief law agent of Sir James Lowther and steward of the manor and forest of Ennerdale. He married in 1766, and died in 1783. His wife, the daughter of a well-to-do shopkeeper, was born in 1747. They had five children: Richard, born August 19, 1768; William, born April 7, 1770; Dorothy, born December 25, 1771; John, born

* In a pamphlet by the genealogist H. J. Hunter, entitled "Old Age in Bath," of which a copy is preserved in the British Museum, there is a letter from the poet dated October 31, 1831, in which he says: "My grandfather, Richard Wordsworth, married a Miss Robinson of Appleby, aunt to the famous Jack Robinson, who represented the county of Westmorland, was Colonel in the Westmorland Militia, and, having borne an active part in Lord North's Administration, died Surveyor of the Woods and Forests. This family was originally called Robertson, of Struan, Perthshire, and if John Robinson had had a son, he himself would have taken the title of Lord Struan. His only daughter married the present Earl of Abergavenny, who was then a Baron, and, as I have been told, probably owed his elevation in the Peerage (great as his family was) to his father-in-law. The Robinsons came into Westmorland in the time of Henry VIII."

There is a very full Wordsworth genealogy in Howard's "Miscellanea Genealogica," New Series, vol. iv.

† A writer in *The Athenæum*, for May 30, 1896, says that a copy of Daniel's "Poetical Works," 1718, contains a note in the handwriting of the poet's grandfather. Daniel was one of Wordsworth's favourite authors.

December 4, 1772; and Christopher, born June 9, 1774. The most closely written passage in the little sketch of his life, dictated by the aged poet, is the one in which he endeavoured to compel his memory to give up all it contained about his mother:

"The time of my infancy and early boyhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with my mother's parents at Penrith, where my mother, in the year 1778, died of a decline, brought on by a cold, the consequence of being put, at a friend's house in London, in what used to be called 'a best bedroom.' My father never recovered his usual cheerfulness of mind after this loss, and died when I was in my fourteenth year, a schoolboy just returned from Hawkshead, whither I had been sent with my elder brother Richard, in my ninth year. I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast when I was going to say the catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter."

This recollection, fragrant indeed, he has recorded in verse:

> How fluttered then thy anxious heart for me,
> Beloved Mother! Thou whose happy hand
> Had bound the flowers I wore, with faithful tie:
> Sweet flowers! at whose inaudible command
> Her countenance, phantom-like, doth reappear:
> O lost too early for the frequent tear,
> And ill-requited by this heartfelt sigh!

"I remember also," he continues, "telling her on one week-day that I had been at church, for our school stood in a churchyard, and we had frequent opportunities of seeing what was going on there. The occasion was, a woman doing penance in the church in a white sheet. My mother commended my having been present, expressing a hope that I should remember the circumstance for the rest of my life. 'But,' said I, 'Mama, they did not give me a penny, as I had been told they would.' 'Oh,' said she, recanting her praises, 'if that was your motive, you were very properly disappointed.'

"My last impression was having a glimpse of her on passing the door of her bedroom during her last illness, when she was reclining in her easy chair. An intimate friend of hers, Miss Hamilton by name, who was used to visit her at Cockermouth, told me that she once said

to her, that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious, was William; and he, she said, would be remarkable either for good or for evil. The cause of this was, that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper; so much so that I remember going once into the attics of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed. Upon another occasion, while I was at my grandfather's house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother, Richard, we were whipping tops together in the large drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down upon particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, 'Dare you strike your whip through that old lady's petticoat?' He replied, 'No, I won't.' 'Then,' said I, 'here goes;' and I struck my lash through her hooped petticoat, for which, no doubt, though I have forgotten it, I was properly punished. But possibly from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise."

He carried the same toughness of resolution through life, bearing himself high in all affairs and seldom taking counsel of other men. Strangely enough, however, he came through the period of boyhood and youth without suffering any serious trouble that can be attributed to this quality. The hard strain was tempered by a gentleness equally characteristic. Though naturally inclined to be severe in his judgments, he was too close and sympathetic an observer not to see the good in his playmates and companions. Moreover, having brothers near his own age, and being often sent to live under the rigorous discipline of his relatives at Penrith, he early learned to accommodate himself to the will of those to whom he owed obligation.

Although John Wordsworth was a prosperous man of business, and occupied one of the most imposing houses in the busy town of Cockermouth, the family no doubt lived plainly. There were no overshadowing great families to take the colour out of life, nor had the place been disfigured by industry. It was then, as it

remains now, a centre for the sheep and wool trade. The Wordsworth house, a long brick mansion, with its face to the main street, and its back towards the river and the ruined castle, is still one of the largest in the town. The children were left much to themselves, and roamed freely in a little world abounding in natural pleasures and fair humanities. In a crisis of his life, when he feared lest, like a false steward, he might render no sufficient return to the world for the advantages he had enjoyed, the poet wrote:*

> Was it for this
> That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
> To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
> And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
> And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
> That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
> O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
> Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
> Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
> To more than infant softness, giving me
> Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
> A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
> That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

Then, referring to the ruins of Cockermouth Castle and to the garden behind his father's house, which ran down to the river and looked across it to the open country, he continues:

> When he had left the mountains and received
> On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
> That yet survive, a shattered monument
> Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
> Along the margin of our terrace walk;
> A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
> Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
> In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
> Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
> Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
> The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
> Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,
> The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
> Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone

* "Prelude," I. 269.

Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantoness, to sport,
A naked savage, in the thunder shower.
Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birthplace.

In the "Address from the Spirit of Cockermouth Castle," a sonnet composed in his old age, he recalls hours of play in the dungeon and grassy courts of this ancient pile. Even before his mother's death he was much with her relatives at Penrith, where he attended a mixed school taught by Mrs. Anne Birkett. His future wife, Mary Hutchinson, daughter of John and Mary Hutchinson, of Penrith, was one of his schoolmates. At Cockermouth he had some instruction from the Rev. Mr. Gilbanks, and began the study of Latin.

In the fifth book of "The Prelude" he contrasts the freedom of his early years with the close guidance enjoined by Rousseau, and illustrated in Thomas Day's "Sandford and Merton." He expressed his gratitude for his mother's wisdom in permitting his instincts to unfold themselves without irreverent and fretful meddling. In the large quiet of her simple nature he enjoyed the immunities of childhood, its indifference to the future, its absorption in the present, its long spaces of happy solitude. The passage is of considerable biographical interest, especially in view of the unique importance of childhood instincts in Wordsworth's philosophy:*

Early died
My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves:
She left us destitute, and, as we might,
Trooping together. Little suits it me
To break upon the sabbath of her rest
With any thought that looks at others' blame;
Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.
Hence am I checked: but let me boldly say,
In gratitude, and for the sake of truth,
Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,
Fetching her goodness rather from times past,

* "Prelude," V. 256.

Than shaping novelties for times to come,
Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,
Doth also for our nobler part provide,
Under His great correction and control,
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food;
Or draws for minds that are left free to trust
In the simplicities of opening life
Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.
This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
From anxious fear of error or mishap,
And evil, overweeningly so called;
Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
Nor with impatience from the season asked
More than its timely produce; rather loved
The hours for what they are, than from regard
Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
Such was she—not from faculties more strong
Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
A heart that found benignity and hope,
Being itself benign.

According to his nephew and biographer, the Bishop of Lincoln, "The poet's father set him very early to learn portions of the works of the best English poets by heart, so that at an early age he could repeat large portions of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser." This training contributed to develop, if it did not create, an extraordinary capacity and retentiveness of memory, besides a power, probably unmatched in modern times, of composing many lines of poetry without the employment of writing, a power the more fortunate because he was afflicted with a nervous disorder which made the use of the pen very irksome. And since one of the most remarkable qualities of his work is the way in which perfect naturalness and simplicity are united with the most refined artifice and with literary culture, it is interesting to know that some of the poetical reminiscences that echo through his verse date from his earliest childhood. There are passages in his poems

that remind one of Milton especially, or make one feel the very breath of Spenser or Shakespeare, yet without definite resemblance. It is as if lifelong converse with the elder poets had given him, upon occasion, their mode of thought, and, above all, their melodies.

It is probable, from their nearness of age and similarity of disposition, that even in these earliest days of childhood William's favourite companion was his sister Dorothy. An anecdote relating to their life at that time concerns her. Speaking of the sea-shore near Cockermouth, the poet in his extreme old age said:

"With this coast I have been familiar from my earliest childhood, and I remember being struck for the first time by the town and port of Whitehaven, and the white waves breaking against its quays and piers as the whole came into view from the top of the high ground down which the road (it has since been altered) then descended abruptly. My sister, when she first heard the voice of the sea from this point, and beheld the scene spread before her, burst into tears. Our family then lived at Cockermouth, and this fact was often mentioned among us as indicating the sensibility for which she was so remarkable."

In 1801, when he and his sister had settled at Town-end, Grasmere, he wrote the following poem in the orchard there:

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.

The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

The manuscript sent originally to the printer had the name " Dorothy " for " Emmeline." In a note to this poem, dictated to Miss Fenwick, in 1843, the poet said:

" At the end of the garden of my father's house at Cockermouth was a high terrace that commanded a fine view of the river Derwent and Cockermouth Castle. This was our favourite playground. The terrace wall, a low one, was covered with closely-clipt privet and roses, which gave an almost impervious shelter to birds who built their nests there. The latter of these stanzas alludes to one of those nests."

Once again, in the peace of those first months with his sister at Grasmere, he wrote a poem reminiscent of their early childhood, the lines " To a Butterfly ":

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy!
Float near me; do not yet depart!
Dead times revive in thee:
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!
A solemn image to my heart,
My father's family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey;—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

In her Grasmere Journal, under date of March 14, 1802, Dorothy records the composition of this poem, and says:

" The thought first came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always felt at the sight of a

butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little, but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings, and did not catch them. He told me how he used to kill all the white ones when he went to school, because they were Frenchmen."

The superiority of Wordsworth was inborn. A congenital gift of intelligence and susceptibility was shared between him and his sister, while his brother John possessed a rare appreciation of poetry, and his brother Christopher, who became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, was endowed with eminent strength of mind. A spirit of light must therefore have dwelt in the rather severe brick house at Cockermouth, where this extraordinary brood came into existence. Both parents happily rejected the temptation to warp the well-born natures, of whose fine quality they must have been aware. Long visits to their mother's old home at Penrith and occasional trips to the seashore appear to have been the only variations in the placid lives of the children.

In the twelfth book of "The Prelude," the poet summons up, in minute detail, another episode of his early childhood, which occurred near Penrith. He was riding, while yet "his inexperienced hand could scarcely hold a bridle"; and having become separated from the servant who accompanied him, he was leading his horse, when he came upon the remains of a gibbet and the name of a murderer marked in the turf at its foot. "A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam" made even this lugubrious event one of his mind's treasures.

Mrs. Wordsworth died in March, 1778, and was buried at Penrith. Then began the dispersal, to which Dorothy in her letters ruefully refers, using more than once the expression, "How we are squandered abroad!" She was sent to live with her grandmother Cookson at Penrith, and Richard and William were sent to school at Hawkshead. For Dorothy this was the beginning of a long period of lonely suffering and spiritual homelessness. For William it was an auspicious turning-point, from which we may date one of the happiest and most

receptive portions of his life. From his ninth to his eighteenth year Hawkshead was virtually his home. His younger brothers, John and Christopher, joined him there in due season; and although there must have been many reunions at Cockermouth, few traces of them remain. The poet relates, in the twelfth book of "The Prelude," that one Christmas-time he climbed to the top of a crag and "sate half-sheltered by a naked wall," watching through the mist for the led palfreys that should bear him home, his brothers and himself; and ever afterwards he could remember

> the wind and sleety rain,
> And all the business of the elements,
> The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
> And the bleak music from that old stone wall.

He tells of flinging himself, in his holidays at his father's house, upon the books he found there, and of spoiling a good day's fishing in the Derwent by lying on the hot stones in the glaring sun, reading with desperate haste, when he should have been minding his rod and line.

His father died December 30, 1783, in consequence of a cold caught while riding over the mountains on business. The family estate consisted chiefly of claims, amounting to about £4,700, on Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale, whose legal agent John Wordsworth had been. It appears that the earl had withheld money due to his agent, and even forced from him considerable loans. He held himself superior to the law, and when subsequently the case came up for trial, he retained all the best counsel, and succeeded in thwarting justice during the rest of his life. Meanwhile, for nineteen years, the Wordsworth children lived on prospects, which would not have carried them far had not their relatives come to their assistance. The children were put in charge of their father's brother Richard and their mother's uncle Christopher Crackanthorpe Cookson. Upon the earl's death, in 1802, their property was paid to them with interest by his successor.

The village of Hawkshead is little changed from what

THE HOUSE IN WHICH WORDSWORTH WAS BORN

From a photograph by Walmsley

[Vol. I., p. 28

it was in 1778. It lies in the shallow vale of Esthwaite, near the head of Esthwaite Water, a lake about two miles long, between and almost equally distant from the larger lakes of Windermere and Coniston. The valley is sprinkled with small farms, and its higher grounds are wooded with beech and oak and fir. The little town is of great antiquity, and has long held the distinction of being a market for the wool grown in the surrounding country. It is situated near the extreme northern angle of Lancashire, which is wedged between Cumberland on the west and Westmorland on the east. Its houses, of grey stone, with thick slabbed roofs, stand in a charmingly haphazard way around several open spaces of irregular shape, called squares. There are no mansions here, and no hovels. The dwellings bear witness to that equality and that general diffusion of humble comfort which were formerly even more characteristic of the Lake country than they are now. A mountain brook flows through a buried conduit under one of the streets. It once was only half hidden by flagstones, and was an object of interest to children. On a hill that rises abruptly from one side of the village stands a noble Gothic church, of considerable antiquity. Its long grey mass can scarcely be distinguished at a distance from the rock on which it rests, so naturally, as regards colour and form, does it harmonize with its surroundings. The turf of the churchyard creeps up to the very doors, and the black foliage of immemorial yew-trees masks the gravestones of many generations, removed only a few paces from the scene of their activity. That a community so undistinguished by wealthy families could erect this relatively vast edifice must have impressed the mind even of a schoolboy with a sense of respect for human nature. Inside, the nave spreads wide, and the aisles, with their dignified perpendicular tracery, lift their arches high, so that the light streams free in every part, and the outer world seems to mingle unquestioned with the sacred enclosure.

The free grammar-school to which the Wordsworth boys were sent was founded in 1585 by Edwin Sandys,

Archbishop of York, a native of the region. The building, containing one large and two small schoolrooms and the head-master's apartment, is a substantial and simple structure. A large square schoolroom, with an ample fireplace, occupies most of the ground-floor, and above are apartments for the master and the usher.* The old " forms," or long desks, still stand about the walls, and in one of them can be seen the name " William Wordsworth " deep carved in schoolboy fashion. Pure country air, blowing unchecked from field and lake, enters through the wide door and big windows. Not even the Gothic luxuriance of Winchester or Eton gives so full a sense of appropriate surroundings for the education of boys. The provision for their minds may not have been as complex as that to be found in the more famous Southern seminaries, but it was well selected, and quite generous enough when to it were added the outside influences that co-operated with books and teachers. Latin, mathematics, and the elements of Greek, were the staple subjects taught. The morning session began between six and half-past in summer, and at seven in winter, and lasted till eleven. The afternoon session was from one to five in summer, and from one to four in winter. At all other times the boys were free, since the preparation of lessons was made in school. According to the requirements of the founder, there was, besides the master, an usher, or assistant, and they were both obliged to be present during school hours. Wordsworth, in the autobiographical sketch, says of his Hawkshead life:

" Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty, then and in the vacations, to read whatever books I liked. For example, I read all Fielding's works, ' Don Quixote,' ' Gil Blas,' and any part of Swift that I liked; ' Gulliver's Travels ' and the ' Tale of the Tub ' being both much to my taste. I was very much indebted to one of the ushers of Hawkshead School, by name Shaw, who taught me more of Latin

* The attendance has of late so dwindled that it has been found necessary to close this ancient school.

in a fortnight than I had learnt during two preceding years at the school of Cockermouth. Unfortunately for me, this excellent master left our school, and went to Stafford, where he taught for many years. It may be perhaps as well to mention, that the first verses which I wrote were a task imposed by my master; the subject, 'The Summer Vacation'; and of my own accord I added others upon 'Return to School.' There was nothing remarkable in either poem; but I was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary from the foundation of the school in 1585, by Archbishop Sandys. These verses were much admired, far more than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification, and a little in his style. This exercise, however, put it into my head to compose verses from the impulse of my own mind, and I wrote, while yet a schoolboy, a long poem running upon my own adventures, and the scenery of the country in which I was brought up. The only part of that poem which has been preserved is the conclusion of it, which stands at the beginning of my collected poems."

William Taylor, who was head-master from 1782 to 1786, when he died in the midst of his scholars, is the person to whom the poet refers in the lines beginning, "I come, ye little noisy Crew," and in the succeeding elegies. He also furnished some of the traits for the old man in "The Two April Mornings" and "The Fountain," and perhaps for one of the characters in "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned." Years after Taylor's death, the poet, standing opposite the tablet in the schoolroom on which his name and the record of his service were inscribed, composed his "Matthew," in which he gives a glimpse of the happy schoolmaster:

> Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
> Is silent as a standing pool;
> Far from the chimney's merry roar,
> And murmur of the village school.
>
> The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs
> Of one tired out with fun and madness;
> The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
> Were tears of light, the dew of gladness.

The gay old man, something between a schoolmaster and a retired labourer, whose image shapes itself in one's mind on reading these poems, can have been only suggested by Taylor, who was but thirty-two when he died; yet the fact that the poet could think thus of a teacher many years his senior shows that the latter must have been a singularly gentle and humorous person, and the boy beyond his age advanced in sympathy with mature minds. Taylor died in office, bidding farewell to the boys from his death-bed. So deep was the impression made on the poet's mind by this incident, that thirteen years afterwards, when he was spending a winter in Germany, he wrote, probably retouching an earlier effusion:

I come, ye little noisy Crew,
Not long your pastime to prevent;
I heard the blessing which to you
Our common Friend and Father sent.
I kissed his cheek before he died;
And when his breath was fled,
I raised, while kneeling by his side,
His hand:—it dropped like lead.

* * * * *

By night or day, blow foul or fair,
Ne'er will the best of all your train
Play with the locks of his white hair,
Or stand between his knees again.
Here did he sit confined for hours;
But he could see the woods and plains,
Could hear the wind and mark the showers
Come streaming down the streaming panes.
Now stretched beneath his grass-green mound
He rests a prisoner of the ground.
He loved the breathing air,
He loved the sun, but if it rise
Or set, to him where now he lies,
Brings not a moment's care.

And then, in the accompanying "Dirge," the poet calls on various persons, doubtless familiar characters in Hawkshead and its neighbourhood, to mourn his beloved teacher: the Shepherd near the old grey stone, the Angler by the silent flood, the Woodman, the blind Sailor, the half-witted deaf-mute Boy. "True of heart,

of spirit gay "—so much foundation at least for the homely figure of Matthew was the gift of the Rev. William Taylor, M.A., of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Like the Wanderer in "The Excursion," the Schoolmaster of these poems "was made up of several both of his class and men of other occupations." [Wordsworth's note to "Matthew."]

Eight years later, as is recorded in "The Prelude,"* the poet made a pilgrimage to Cartmell churchyard, where Taylor was buried:

> That very morning had I turned aside
> To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
> An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,
> And on the stone were graven by his desire
> Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.
> This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,
> Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
> But said to me, "My head will soon lie low";
> And when I saw the turf that covered him,
> After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
> With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
> Came back upon me, so that some few tears
> Fell from me in my own despite. But now
> I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,
> With tender pleasure of the verses graven
> Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:
> He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
> Would have loved me, as one not destitute
> Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
> That he had formed, when I, at his command,
> Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

The boy was happy in having teachers with traits of character so winsome that memory could compose from them the picture of a Matthew, humorous and wise, companionable to a lad younger than himself, yet rousing boyish reverence when he retired to the depths of his experience. Wordsworth was also fortunate in that the superiority of his intellect proved no barrier between him and his mates. He shared their life wholeheartedly. To judge from his account of it in "The Prelude," one would say that because they were boys and happy they were all more or less poets. They were

* X. 532.

drawn from a wide range of society: sons of country clergymen and the professional and business men of north-country towns, sons of villagers and small farmers. The most fortunate class of all Englishmen who laboured with their hands, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were the small farmers or "statesmen" in the vales of Westmorland, Cumberland and northern Lancashire. Their ancestors came into possession of the soil before the Reformation, when the monks of Furness Abbey and other great land-owning ecclesiastical establishments encouraged independent settlement in place of feudal tenure or mere tenantship, in the hope of providing a larger and more stubborn population for defence against the Scottish raiders. They had thus, in Wordsworth's time, been for several centuries raised above the position of tenant farmers. They tilled their own soil, to which they clung with deep attachment, sentimental considerations blending with economic. They were equally disposed to guard with jealous defiance their rights of pasturage on the fells or mountain-tops. The boldness of character which they inherited from their Scandinavian forefathers was reenforced by the sense of possession. Yet a spirit of adventure and the influence of their religious teachers kept them aloof from the greedy land-hunger and the consequent parsimony which are noticeable among peasant proprietors in France. Like the corresponding class in Scotland, they were alive to the superiority of mental attainments, and ready to make sacrifices to educate their children. In a letter on popular education, Wordsworth, in 1808, referred as follows to this trait of the farmers in the Lake District:*

"We have, thank Heaven, free schools, or schools with some endowment, almost everywhere; and almost everyone can read. But not because we have free or endowed schools, but because our land is, far more than elsewhere, tilled by men who are the owners of it; and as the population is not overcrowded, and the vices which are quickened and cherished in a crowded population do

* "Memoirs," II. 179.

not therefore prevail, parents have more ability and inclination to send their children to school; much more than in manufacturing districts, and also, though in a less degree, more than in agricultural ones where the tillers are not proprietors."

The boys lived frugally and on a plane of equality, lodging and boarding with Hawkshead families, of whose home-life they made a part. Some of the boys the poet mentions by name, and not a few of their exploits he records in "The Prelude" and in scattered notes. The kind dame with whom he lived was Anne Tyson, whom he always held in grateful memory for her motherly care. Her cottage was, and is, a grey stone dwelling, two stories high, on a side-street. An ash-tree stood before it, and through its garden sang the imprisoned brook. A sweet harmony bound together the hours in school with the unmeasured time of play and repose in Hawkshead homes, and of adventure in the open country; and the sunny seat "round the stone table under the dark pine," before Dame Tyson's cottage, was friendly alike "to studious or to festive hours." From the early books of "The Prelude" emerges an engaging picture of a happy childhood, as normal a childhood as there could be without the abiding presence of a father and mother. M. Legouis has pointed out* the great difference between Wordsworth's cheerful memories of school life and the sadness or indignation with which many French men of letters have recalled the years they spent in the confinement of their *lycées*. English poets, too, have, in some cases, lamented the melancholy circumstances of their boyhood, the separation from home, and the brutality of school customs, not to mention the necessary and probably salutary routine. The school days of Coleridge, for example, are sad to think upon. Wordsworth looked back with more than cheerfulness—with enthusiasm and gratitude—to his Hawkshead years. These and his first six or eight years at Grasmere were the periods when nature spoke to him most directly, and he lived most free from responsibilities, growing all the

* "La Jeunesse de Wordsworth," Book I., Chapter II.

while in power to interpret himself and the world. He felt at home at Hawkshead from the beginning. In the very week of his arrival a startling incident,* in which he was involved, opened to him, through fellow-feeling, the emotional depths of the place. Walking beside the lake, he found a heap of clothes. The search for their owner and the discovery of his dead body in the water drew the village together in terror; yet "no soul-debasing fear" possessed the child, for he tells us his

> inner eye had seen
> Such sights before, among the shining streams
> Of faëry land, the forest of romance.

The minds of imaginative children who have read fairy-tales and wonder-books become endued with a thin but sufficient armour against the shocks of reality. It is the matter-of-fact child that suffers most from violent disturbance of his expectations. It is one of the immunities, no less than one of the dangers, of poetic temperaments that they are spared much of the suddenness with which the collisions of life jar prosaic souls.

The boys among whom he herded were

> A race of real children; not too wise,
> Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
> And bandied up and down by love and hate;
> Not unresentful where self-justified;
> Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
> Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
> Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
> Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
> Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
> In happiness to the happiest upon earth.†

Their happiness was due no less to natural advantages than to the wise liberality with which they were governed. In two minutes every boy could run from his dame's doorstep to the open fields, and at no great distance lay tracts of wood and moor. They ranged the open heights, trapping birds after dark, and hunting their eggs by day, "shouldering the naked crag." They crept forth before dawn on mysterious errands, and

* "Prelude," V. 426-459. † *Ibid.*, 411.

played late into the "soft starry nights," around the stone where an old woman, in the largest square, sold cakes and apples.*

> Duly were our games
> Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed:
> No chair remained before the doors; the bench
> And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
> The labourer, and the old man who had sate
> A later lingerer; yet the revelry
> Continued and the loud uproar: at last,
> When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
> Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
> Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.

In autumn they explored the hazel copses for nuts, and all the green summer they fished "By rocks and pools shut out from every star." From hill-top and meadow they flew their kites. In winter,†

> when the sun
> Was set, and visible for many a mile
> The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,

they skated through the darkness below the solitary cliffs till,

> with the din
> Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
> The leafless trees and every icy crag
> Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
> Into the tumult sent an alien sound
> Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
> Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
> The orange sky of evening died away.

Thus, he tells us, his sympathies were enlarged, and the daily range of visible things grew dear to him. He beheld familiar scenes change with the revolving year till they were not what they had been, and yet were mysteriously the same. He watched the expression of nature run on in endless variety while the majestic presence remained for ever. The pathos, the charm, and the power of nature showed themselves in this contrast. Monotony was as necessary as alteration to reveal the fulness of the eternal being and impress with awe the beholder's mind. The events that fill earth

* "Prelude," II. 9. † *Ibid.*, I. 425.

and sky with dramatic action forced themselves upon him in unsolicited invasion. His soul lay passive at first; then it awoke to observe actively, and at last to contemplate and respond. From the danger of being prematurely lured away from the commonplace he was saved by the lusty sports of his fellows; yet he was always so much unlike ordinary boys as to remind one of Rousseau's remark, " Thoughtless boys make commonplace men."

His acquaintance extended from high to low throughout the neighbourhood. In his comment upon the lines beginning " Nay, Traveller, rest," which were composed in part at school in Hawkshead, he tells us that his delight in a rocky peninsula on Windermere was so great that he led thither a youngster about his own age, an Irish boy, who was servant to an itinerant conjurer. His purpose was to witness the lad's pleasure in the prospect, and he was not disappointed. It was probably in the roads about Hawkshead that he observed the old Cumberland beggar, whose helpless existence was an appeal to the charity of farmers' wives and passing horsemen riding in the pride of life. The Two Thieves, one a doting old man of more than ninety years, the other equally innocent, his grandson, aged three, were familiar figures in the village, where they performed an unconscious ministry of tender-heartedness. No one could behold them sinlessly committing their daily crimes, without reflecting on the nature of moral responsibility and making allowance for immaturity and decay. The original of the Pedlar, in the poem which at first went by that name and was later called " The Excursion," was a packman who occasionally lived at Hawkshead, with whom the boy Wordsworth " had frequent conversations upon what had befallen him, and what he had observed, during his wandering life." And, as he told a friend in after-years, they took much to one another, " as was natural." It is to this Pedlar that the following lines in " The Excursion " refer.* They are but the beginning of a long

* I. 52.

and very attractive description, one of the most complete portraits in Wordsworth's gallery of worthies:

> We were tried Friends: amid a pleasant vale,
> In the antique market-village where was passed
> My school-time, an apartment he had owned,
> To which at intervals the Wanderer drew,
> And found a kind of home or harbour there.
> He loved me; from a swarm of rosy boys
> Singled out me, as he in sport would say,
> For my grave looks, too thoughtful for my years.
> As I grew up, it was my best delight
> To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,
> On holidays, we rambled through the woods:
> We sate—we walked; he pleased me with report
> Of things which he had seen; and often touched
> Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind
> Turned inwards; or at my request would sing
> Old songs, the product of his native hills.

Another of his grown-up friends, living near Hawkshead, was the man to whom he attached himself one day when the common delusion of anglers caused him to believe that the farther from home the better the fishing. They worked their way to the sources of the Duddon, high in the mountains, and with small success. When the rain began to fall in torrents, the little fisherman, hungry and tired and wet, had to be carried home on his friend's back. The Jacobite and the Hanoverian, who figure in the same poem, were drawn from " two individuals who, by their several fortunes, were at different times driven to take refuge at the small and obscure town of Hawkshead on the skirt of these mountains. Their stories I had from the dear old dame with whom, as a schoolboy and afterwards, I lodged for the space of nearly ten years."*

In wilder flight, the boys rowed races on Windermere, played on the bowling-green, and ate strawberries and cream upon its farther shore, and, as their utmost extravagance, visited on horseback ancient landmarks far away, such as Furness Abbey. These were exceptional treats, exhausting their little weekly stipend, so that

* Note to " The Excursion," dictated by Wordsworth to Miss Fenwick, about 1843.

three-quarters of the year they "lived in penniless poverty." Plain and simple was the ordinary fare, and quiet were the usual pursuits. They had their "home amusements by the warm peat-fire," at evening, when a well-worn pack of cards did faithful service, while abroad

> Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
> Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth.

There are two ways of keeping a schoolboy busy, which is the first condition of his welfare. One is by rigorous discipline. The other and safer way is by alluring him to occupy himself in the pursuit of such happiness as is proper to his age and conducive to his development. These truisms were less commonly accepted in the eighteenth century than they are now, and there can be no doubt that Wordsworth's experience at Hawkshead was exceptional. The liberty he enjoyed could hardly be accorded even now in a large town. It was his good-fortune to be brought up in the country, under generous rules and among plain people. He learned at Hawkshead to value at their just worth the intelligence and morality of the poor. His judgment of people in humble life was unmarred either by sentimental exaggeration or unfeeling ignorance. He had lived among them, eating at their tables and playing with their children. Writing to his friend Wrangham in 1808, he thus estimates the book-learning of the poor but independent farmers and villagers among whom a large part of his boyhood had been passed:*

"As far as my own observation goes, which has been mostly employed upon agricultural persons in thinly-peopled districts, I cannot find that there is much disposition to read among the labouring classes, or much occasion for it. . . . The labouring man in agriculture generally carries on his work either in solitude or with his own family—with persons whose minds he is thoroughly acquainted with, and with whom he is under no temptation to enter into discussions or to compare opinions. He goes home from the field, or the barn, and within and without his own house he finds a hundred little jobs

* "Memoirs," II. 175.

which furnish him with a change of employment which is grateful and profitable; then comes supper, and bed. This for week-days. For Sabbaths, he goes to church with us often or mostly twice a day; on coming home, someone turns to the Bible, finds the text, and probably reads the chapter whence it is taken, or perhaps some other; and in the afternoon the master or mistress frequently reads the Bible, if alone; and on this day the mistress of the house almost always teaches the children to read, or, as they express it, hears them a lesson; or if not thus employed, they visit their neighbours, or receive them in their own houses as they drop in, and keep up by the hour a slow and familiar chat."

So natural to him did this association become that he scarcely refers to it in "The Prelude" among the influences which moulded his mind. That unique autobiographical poem traces rather, in its early books, the sources of his reliance upon his primal instincts as developed in free communion with nature. Mingled with the passages already quoted are others of a more intimate revelation in which the adventures of the spirit are recorded.

The consciousness of nature as a source of love and as a monitor came to him in moments when his being was invaded by a higher power than himself, taking tranquil possession of his senses, and unexpectedly of his affections too. A frequently recurring joy, if it be pure and bring no painful consequences, creates love for the source whence it is bestowed. So his heart became engaged more deeply with every sweeping return of these dear delights. The occasions of noticeable growth to which he directs our attention in the first book of "The Prelude" were moments when natural duty and childish fear met in his heart. In the following passage he relates how his moral consciousness was bound for ever, though by what might be called a mere illusion, to the ineluctable presences of nature:*

> Ere I had told
> Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
> Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
> The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy

* "Prelude," I. 306.

With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation;—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell,
In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

This passage no doubt had a significance to Wordsworth beyond the grasp of men who would limit the origin of moral admonition to some historic "authority," or even to "the inner voice" of conscience. He believed, and probably for this reason treasured up this incident and gave it prominence, that the soul of the universe, uttering its august precepts through the clean air and the unsullied earth, speaks an intelligible language to the heart of man; because law and duty are the same for man and star and flower. Many instincts that we deem superstition are probably based on a vague apprehension of this truth. Many observances among primitive people bear witness to it. A much larger part of our impulses and restraints than we are commonly disposed to admit are due to an unconscious imitation of nature in her qualities analogous to human virtues such as rectitude and prudence. "Thanks," the poet wrote,*

Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

Innumerable passages in his poetry developed this thought, now subtly and speculatively, as in "Peter

* "Prelude," I. 351.

Bell," now with eloquent assurance, as in the " Ode to Duty." He has expressed it, too, in prose in the letter already cited:

" One of our neighbours, who lived as I have described [that is, as a busy farmer, with little time for reading], was yesterday walking with me; and as we were pacing on, talking about indifferent matters, by the side of a brook, he suddenly said to me, with great spirit and a lively smile: ' I like to walk where I can hear the sound of a *beck!*' (the word, as you know, in our dialect for a brook). I cannot but think that this man, without being conscious of it, has had many devout feelings connected with the appearances which have presented themselves to him in his employment as a shepherd, and that the pleasure of his heart at that moment was an acceptable offering to the Divine Being."

Another instance, almost crudely definite, may be cited to illustrate Wordsworth's belief, by no means vague, that nature exercised a moralizing influence over him in his boyhood. One summer evening, " led by her," he unloosed a boat and rowed away in the moonlight:*

Lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts

* " Prelude," I. 356.

> There hung a darkness, call it solitude
> Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
> Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
> Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
> But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
> Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
> By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Call it ecstasy or the unconscious exercise of reason, the state of mind when such influxes of experience are possible is the requisite condition of growth in childhood. The soul is startled into self-consciousness, and then awed by becoming aware of the deep community that binds it to the life even of insensate things. A little later, diffidence and veneration guide the older child. "Such virtues," Wordsworth tells us,* "are the sacred attributes of youth; its appropriate calling is not to distinguish in the fear of being deceived or degraded, not to analyze with scrupulous minuteness, but to accumulate in genial confidence; its instinct, its safety, its benefit, its glory, is to love, to admire, to feel, and to labour." This the teacher should remember; he should be "rich in that knowledge . . . which cannot exist without a liveliness of memory, preserving for him an unbroken image of the winding, excursive, and often retrograde course, along which his own intellect has passed." Yet even thus furnished, and "governed habitually by the wisdom of patience, waiting with pleasure . . . remarks may drop insensibly from him which shall wither in the mind of his pupil a generous sympathy, destroy a sentiment of approbation or dislike, not only innocent but salutary; and for the inexperienced disciple how many pleasures may be thus cut off, what joy, what admiration, and what love!"

In "The Prelude" the poet preserves the distinction between the process by which intellectual life is kindled in the child and that by which "the Youth, who daily farther from the east must travel," and who is less splendidly ministered to, must win his way to a wise

* Grosart, "Wordsworth's Prose Works," I. 325: a letter reprinted from Coleridge's *Friend*, 1809, and originally written in reply to an appeal for advice from John Wilson (Christopher North).

independence. The examples of the former which he gives in the first two books are of great significance, not merely because they are gleams of elusive truth in a twilight region of human experience. Wordsworth is almost, though not quite, unique in the reality of his recollections of these high places of childhood. Other poets have made their revelations, too. But he is unique in the degree of assurance with which he insists that these shadowy recollections

> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

Not only to the psychology of childhood does he contribute these visions of the soul in lonely places, but his final word for the moral guidance of maturity is to search out the secrets of innocence and follow the voice of nature.

If it be thought that in his poetical ascription of educational power to nature the poet has been too visionary, we may fall back upon a precise dogmatic statement which he made in the letter just mentioned above. Referring to the allurements of the World on the one hand, and of Intellectual Prowess on the other, he wrote:

"Of these two, each in this manner soliciting you to become her adherent, you doubt not which to prefer; but oh! the thought of moment is not preference, but the degree of preference; the passionate and pure choice, the inward sense of absolute and unchangeable devotion. . . . The question involved in this deliberation is simple, but at the same time it is high and awful; and I would gladly know whether an answer has been returned satisfactory to the mind. We will for a moment suppose that it cannot; that there is a startling and a hesitation. Are we then to despond—to retire from all contest—and to reconcile ourselves at once to cares without a generous hope, and to efforts in which there is no more moral life than that which is found in the business and labours of the unfavoured and unaspiring many? No. But if the inquiry have not been on just grounds satisfactorily answered, we may refer confidently our youth to that nature of which he deems himself an enthusiastic follower, and one who wishes to continue no less faithful and enthusiastic. We would tell him that there are paths which he has not trodden; recesses which

he has not penetrated; that there is a beauty which he has not seen, a pathos which he has not felt, a sublimity to which he has not been raised. If he have trembled because there has occasionally taken place in him a lapse of which he has been conscious; if he foresees open or secret attacks, which he has had intimations that he will neither be strong enough to resist, nor watchful enough to elude, let him not hastily ascribe this weakness, this deficiency, and the painful apprehensions accompanying them, in any degree to the virtues or noble qualities with which youth by nature is furnished; but let him first be assured, before he looks about for the means of obtaining the insight, the discriminating powers, and the confirmed wisdom of manhood, that his soul has more to demand of the appropriate excellencies of youth than youth has yet supplied to it; that the evil under which he labours is not a superabundance of the instincts and the animating spirit of that age, but a falling short or a failure. But what can he gain from this admonition? He cannot recall past time; he cannot begin his journey afresh; he cannot untwist the links by which, in no undelightful harmony, images and sentiments are wedded in his mind. Granted that the sacred light of childhood is and must be for him no more than a remembrance. He may, notwithstanding, be remanded to nature, and with trustworthy hopes, founded less upon his sentient than upon his intellectual being; to nature, as leading on insensibly to the society of reason, but to reason and will, as leading back to the wisdom of nature. A reunion, in this order accomplished, will bring reformation and timely support; and the two powers of reason and nature, thus reciprocally teacher and taught, may advance together in a track to which there is no limit."

It has often been remarked that his works, particularly "The Prelude," show Wordsworth to have been a reader of Rousseau. And although it might be difficult to cite many passages in which Rousseau's teachings are distinctly traceable, there can hardly be any doubt that he was. But no connection has been traced between the mode of life at Hawkshead School and the pedagogical theories expressed in Rousseau's "Émile." For one thing, and the most important, the education outlined in "Émile" is an education by hand, a supervision of a single child by a single tutor. The picture—

an exaggerated one, to be sure, and not fully warranted by the book, but, nevertheless, the image it has created in most minds—the picture we frame of Émile walking in fancied freedom amid educational traps laid by his invisible and omniscient *gouverneur*, is as different as could be from the vision we have in Wordsworth's pages, of Hawkshead boys at liberty, forming their characters by intercourse with one another and with the villagers, without supervision or plan. Yet, distinguishing between the state of Hawkshead School, with which Rousseau's ideas may have had nothing to do, and the image of the life there, reflected many years later in Wordsworth's poetry, we find in "The Prelude" indubitable evidences that Wordsworth had absorbed the philosophy of "Émile." The fundamental principle of the latter is "the incontestable maxim that Nature's first impulses are always right, and there is no original perversity in the human heart." It follows that "the greatest, the most important, the most useful rule in education is not to gain time, but to lose it," and so "the first step in education should be purely negative; it consists, not in teaching virtue and truth, but in guarding the heart from vice and the mind from error." To anyone fresh from reading the first, second, and fourth books of "The Prelude," these laws of Rousseau sound familiar, and that, too, in spite of Wordsworth's effort, in the fifth book, to express his disapproval of the artificial systems of education suggested by the "Émile" and worked out by some of Rousseau's disciples. He speaks scornfully* of those

> who have the skill
> To manage books and things, and make them act
> On infant minds as surely as the sun
> Deals with a flower;

and asks:

> When will their presumption learn
> That in the unreasoning progress of the world
> A wiser spirit is at work for us,
> A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
> Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
> Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?

* "Prelude," V. 349-363.

No doubt he has in mind especially Thomas Day, the author of the edifying "History of Sandford and Merton," which bears much the same relation to "Émile" that "The Swiss Family Robinson" bears to "Robinson Crusoe." "Sandford and Merton" is by no means a contemptible book. Its purpose was to show how lax and impersonal, how ill adapted to particular cases, were the methods of English public schools, where little regard was had to the individual aptitudes of the boys. But while evidently an imitation of "Émile," it missed the real point of its original, which is that the education of children should consist first and mainly in keeping them free for the kindly work of nature. Under this principle in Rousseau lies a profound faith in the sacredness of childhood. The child is sacred not merely because he is father of the man, in the sense of being that from which a man develops, but because he is the divinely rich and divinely pure source from which manhood is but a dwindling and corrupted stream. With Rousseau, confidence in the goodness of childhood and admiration of the glory of childhood were religious intuitions. The depth of feeling in Rousseau's "Émile" could not, one might think, fail to be perceived by even the most prosaic reader. It is a perfectly sincere book. It is eloquent without effort. It is reasonable without being argumentative. Its author was troubled by no doubts as to the truth of his principles. The eloquence and reasonableness of this noble work found no direct echo in England before Wordsworth, and it was constantly misrepresented. The world too often refuses to accept literally the sincerest maxims of great moralists. "This is a paradox," we blandly say, and pass it by. Thomas Day could not believe that Rousseau was in earnest when he declared that "the first step in education should be purely negative." Cowper, whose "Tyrocinium" is a satire on the traditional methods of education, was restrained by his theological convictions from admitting that "nature's first impulses are always right." He disapproves of schools, and would even appear to advocate for all boys what Rousseau approved

in special cases—namely, training them singly by private tutors. Yet with all his characteristic sincerity his treatment of this great subject is trifling in comparison with Rousseau's. To the Genevan a reverent and wise theory for the conduct of childhood was the inner side, the personal and individual side, of a complete philosophy of life. Its social mandates were based on the same principles: respect for nature, and reverence for man in his original divinity. The spirit of "Émile" is nothing less than religious fervour. No English writer on education in the century before Wordsworth, not even Cowper, was touched with this fire. But it leaped into every fibre of Wordsworth's heart and glowed for many years, if not, indeed, to the end of his life, the central heat of his being.

Perhaps we have for this reason a less accurate description of the poet's school days, in "The Prelude," than we should have if he had not remembered them in the light of a religious principle; though accuracy, indeed, may well be dispensed with here, for the sake of what he has given us. Not unmindful was he of Rousseau's doctrine when he wrote:*

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
> That givest to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things—
> With life and nature—purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

From such a source descended the gifts to which his heart was kept open by the happy accident of having come to Hawkshead. "Easily, indeed," he says,

> We might have fed upon a fatter soil
> Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven.

* "Prelude," I. 401.

The boys were thrown upon their own resources for entertainment as well as for intellectual advancement, " for, exclude," he writes,

> A little weekly stipend, and we lived
> Through three divisions of the quartered year
> In penniless poverty.

In this vacancy, nature deigned to work; and her operation was described in terms to which we are bound to attach a meaning none the less real because we cannot understand the process ourselves:*

> Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
> And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
> And Souls of lonely places! can I think
> A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
> Such ministry, when ye through many a year
> Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
> On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
> Impressed, upon all forms, the characters
> Of danger or desire; and thus did make
> The surface of the universal earth,
> With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
> Work like a sea?

These were tributes brought by nature to her child from earth and sky; but a finer harvest of delights was his also, when his mind, turning inward, became aware of a divine relationship not expressed through objects of sense. And when once this consciousness was awake in him, he faced about to the external world with a new power of apprehension, a feeling of oneness, so that†

> [He] held unconscious intercourse with beauty
> Old as creation, drinking in a pure
> Organic pleasure.

And this he could do because he had felt an intellectual charm in the hallowed and pure motions of sense, a calm delight, he says,‡ which surely must belong

> To those first-born affinities that fit
> Our new existence to existing things,
> And, in our dawn of being, constitute
> A bond of union between life and joy.

* " Prelude," I. 463. † *Ibid.*, 562. ‡ *Ibid.* 555.

Through pure and natural pleasures, whether half physical or altogether of the intelligence, " the common round of visible things " grew dear to him; his sympathies were enlarged; at last his soul could stand alone, unassisted by the " incidental charms " which first attached his heart to rural objects, and

> Nature, intervenient till this time
> And secondary, now at length was sought
> For her own sake.

Alone or with a friend he often walked, before school hours, the full round of Esthwaite water, " five miles of pleasant wandering," exulting in fellowship with nature's beauty, finding kindred moods in nature's morning face, and storing up " an obscure sense of possible sublimity," whereto he might aspire, as to an unattainable goal of his growing faculties. His liberty extended to choice of books. Such liberty Coleridge, too, enjoyed, and to this Wordsworth refers, when he rejoices for them both, that they have escaped the interference of system-mongers, with their surveillance, their examinations, their artificial standards. I will pour out, he says,*

> Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
> Safe from an evil which these days have laid
> Upon the children of the land, a pest
> That might have dried me up, body and soul.
> This verse is dedicate to Nature's self,
> And things that teach as Nature teaches: then,
> Oh ! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
> Where had we been, we two, belovèd Friend !
> If in the season of unperilous choice,
> In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales
> Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
> Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
> We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
> Each in his several melancholy walk
> Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,
> Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
> Or rather like a stallèd ox debarred
> From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
> A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
> A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

* " Prelude," V. 225.

Among his treasures was a volume of "The Arabian Nights," and when he discovered that this was but one of four, he and another boy hoarded their joint savings to buy them; but after several months their resolution failed. His taste was for romances, legends, fictions of love, and tales of warlike adventure. They corresponded to dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, and from this instinctive reaching out after the wonderful he draws the inference that

> Our simple childhood sits upon a throne
> That hath more power than all the elements.*

Something divine is indicated by this faculty, which enables a child to sweep away the objects of sense and create out of its own mind a world not altogether unreal. The poet cannot guess

> what this tells of Being past,
> Nor what it augurs of the life to come;

he can only infer that the mind which can build without regard to space or matter may itself be independent of time, eternal in self-activity.

The gift of verse is not granted to all poetic souls. Yet through some undiscovered law there is doubtless a connection between the power to think synthetically and a tendency to rhythmic expression. Thoughts that cohere with nature's order flow of their own motion in musical numbers. A poet bred in a civilized community can hardly help observing the advantages of verse as an appropriate mould for his deepest and most natural thoughts. The examples he finds in books are to him discoveries of the utmost importance. And thus we see Wordsworth at the age of ten rejoicing in the possession of a new faculty, or rather, a new facility:†

> Twice five years
> Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
> With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
> Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
> For their own *sakes*, a passion and a power.

This was his introduction to the world of art, and he was quick to recognize its identity with the one already

* "Prelude," V. 507. † *Ibid.*, 552.

familiar to his dauntless tread. He who has been intimate, he declared, with living nature, receives from verse *

> Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
> From the great Nature that exists in works
> Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
> Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
> Embodied in the mystery of words.

Before leaving Hawkshead Wordsworth composed a poem of many hundred lines, from which, as he told a friend in his old age, most of the thoughts and images were to be found dispersed through his other writings. Its conclusion, which suggested itself to him as he and his companions were resting in a boat on Coniston Water under a row of magnificent sycamores, has been preserved, with some alterations, in the following verses:

> Dear native regions, I foretell,
> From what I feel at this farewell,
> That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
> And whensoe'er my course shall end,
> If in that hour a single tie
> Survive of local sympathy,
> My soul will cast the backward view,
> The longing look alone on you.
>
> Thus, while the Sun sinks down to rest
> Far in the regions of the west,
> Though to the vale no parting beam
> Be given, not one memorial gleam,
> A lingering light he fondly throws
> On the dear hills where first he rose.

* "Prelude," V. 593.

CHAPTER III

CAMBRIDGE AND THE NORTH

In the autobiographical notes dictated to his nephew, Wordsworth devotes only eight or nine sentences to his career at the University of Cambridge. They are remarkable as much for the important matters of which they make no mention as for the trivialities they record.

"In the month of October, 1787, I was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge,* of which my uncle, Dr. Cookson, had been a fellow. The master, Dr. Chevallier, died very soon after, and, according to the custom of that time, his body, after being placed in the coffin, was removed to the hall of the College, and the pall, spread over the coffin, was stuck over by copies of verses, English or Latin, the composition of the students of St. John's. My uncle seemed mortified when upon inquiry he learnt that none of these verses were from my pen, 'because,' said he, 'it would have been a fair opportunity for distinguishing yourself.' I did not, however, regret that I had been silent on this occasion, as I felt no interest in the deceased person, with whom I had had no intercourse, and whom I had never seen but during his walks in the college grounds.

"When at school, I, with the other boys of the same standing, was put upon reading the first six books of Euclid, with the exception of the fifth; and also in algebra I learnt simple and quadratic equations; and this was for me unlucky, because I had a full twelve-months' start of the freshmen of my year, and accordingly got into rather an idle way, reading nothing but classic authors according to my fancy, and Italian poetry. My Italian master was named Isola, and had been well

* The register at Cambridge shows that Wordsworth matriculated on December 17, 1787, and graduated as a Bachelor of Arts on January 21, 1791. His signature occurs at each entry.

acquainted with Gray the poet. As I took to these studies with much interest, he was proud of the progress I made. Under his correction I translated The Vision of Mirza, and two or three other papers of the Spectator into Italian."

Fortunately, we do not depend on these meagre lines alone for our knowledge of three very important years of the poet's life. "The Prelude" is rich in comment on Cambridge, and interprets with deep scrutiny its effect upon him. He composed almost no poetry there. A few of the letters written by his sister and himself between 1787 and 1791 exist, and are of great interest. In default of further information, it has been usual to enlarge upon his expressions of discontent, or rather want of sympathy, with Cambridge, and to throw the blame upon the university, whose annals have been ransacked to show that it was at that time a place of idleness and dissipation. This view has been insisted upon, with some violence to proportion, even by so judicious a writer as M. Legouis. Recourse has been had to the letters of the poet Gray to prove that in his time the university was already in a low state. But Gray was such a very superior person, so refined, so scholarly, that his standard was severely high. And, moreover, Cambridge could not have been entirely uncongenial to him, for he spent his life there, though not constrained to do so by necessity or duty. Even if he was quite free from youthful petulance when he wrote, in 1736, of the people he beheld around him, "I do not know one of them who inspires me with any ambition of being like him," there is much force in the comment of his friend, William Mason, in 1774: "There is usually a much greater fluctuation of taste and manners in an academical, than a national body; occasioned (to use a scholastic metaphor) by that very quick succession of its component parts, which often goes near to destroy its personal identity. Whatever may be true of such a society at one time, may be, and generally is, ten years after, absolutely false."

There is no reason to think that in 1787, whatever

may have been the case fifty years earlier, Cambridge was in any respect less alert morally than the rest of the country. Hard drinking was a national vice, which was then, perhaps, at its worst, but it was not more prevalent at Cambridge than elsewhere. The Evangelical movement, of which Methodism was the most powerful element, but which affected Anglicans and Nonconformists alike, had already begun to soften the cruelty and refine the grossness of the English people, though its effect was as yet less perceptible among the upper classes than among the industrial workers and tradespeople. Cambridge, with her Puritan traditions, was probably no more hostile than Oxford to this unfashionable, yet gradually permeating, change. Both universities were, of course, jealously barricaded against the other great influence of the century—its rationalism. Religious tests, the heavy make-weight of many and rich Church livings in the gift of colleges, and sumptuous provision for the automatic maintenance of liturgical practices, were characteristic of both. But the natural evolution of the whole of English society was likewise held in check by these and similar restrictions. It might be supposed that the attention given at Cambridge to physical science would have told in favour of free-thought, and furnished a background for progressive action. The method of study, however, being mathematical and deductive, rather than experimental, bore little resemblance to modern scientific processes, and was, on the whole, favourable to the dogmatic and unhistorical way of teaching metaphysics, law, and theology.*

* As J. B. Mullinger remarks, in his "History of the University of Cambridge": "It can hardly be doubted that the tendencies of theological thought in the University throughout the eighteenth century were to a great extent affected by the bias given to its studies. They were characterized by that spirit of 'common sense' and those somewhat mediocre aims which prevailed in society at large, and also by that dislike of enthusiasm and of all beliefs which did not commend themselves to the practical reason which especially distinguished the school of Sherlock, Edmund Law, and Paley. Appeals to the emotional nature on the part of the divine, and the setting up of too lofty ideals of life and conduct, whether in religion or in morality, were alike discouraged." Still, Cambridge prided herself on her interest in science, and was possibly less ecclesiastical than Oxford, certainly less aristocratic.

During the twenty years previous to Wordsworth's matriculation, Cambridge had been kept in lively commotion by the efforts of the Rev. John Jebb, a fellow of Peterhouse, to remove the rule requiring candidates for the degree of B.A. to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, and to institute annual university examinations in classics and mathematics. He and Michael Tyson, of Corpus Christi College, voted as a minority of two against the address of loyalty to George III., in 1769. Two years later he defended the position of Robert Tyrwhitt, of Jesus College, who argued in favour of Unitarianism, in the theological " schools " or public examinations. He preached before the university and in his several country parishes against " subscription," and with the help of his gifted wife carried on a war of pamphlets and newspaper articles against the Tory party in university affairs. He resigned his preferment in the Church of England, left Cambridge in 1776, became an attendant at the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street, in London, studied and practised medicine, and was a friend and associate of Dr. Priestley, who dedicated to him his " Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity." That such a course for a college fellow must have produced a long reverberation in Cambridge will be understood when it is remembered that, according to Parliamentary statutes of William III. and George III., it was blasphemy to deny the doctrine of the Trinity, and persons so doing were excluded from the benefit of the Act of Toleration.

A fellow of Queens' College, the Rev. Thomas Fyshe Palmer, might have lived a comfortable and uneventful life amid the immunities of academic privilege, had not he also embraced the Unitarian doctrine. This one step led him to the Antipodes, making him a pioneer voyager among the South Sea Islands, and one of the first Englishmen to perceive the attractions of Australia and New Zealand for British settlers. He was a convert of Dr. Priestley, and, leaving Cambridge, took charge in 1783 of a Unitarian church at Montrose in Scotland. Later he formed Unitarian societies in Edinburgh, Glasgow,

Arbroath, and Forfar. He belonged to a political club in Dundee called the Friends of Liberty, and in consequence of this connection was arrested in 1793 on a charge of sedition. Readers of Lockhart's "Life of Scott" will not need to be reminded of the public frenzy which prevailed in Scotland at that time, amounting to terror, excited by the slightest suspicion of republicanism. Palmer, though innocent of the specific charges brought against him, was sentenced to transportation for seven years, and after terrible sufferings in the hulks at hard labour in chains, was deported to Australia. At the end of his term, he and some companions, endeavouring to return in a vessel they had acquired, visited New Zealand, and were blown about the archipelagoes of the Pacific until they were captured by the Spanish in the Ladrone Islands, where Palmer died in 1802. His body was brought by an American ship-captain, three years later, to Boston, Massachusetts, and interred there, and a monument was erected to his memory on the Calton Hill, Edinburgh.

Cambridge was more deeply stirred by the defection of William Frend, whose prosecution fell precisely in the years of Wordsworth's undergraduate life, and had a great effect upon Coleridge. He was a student of Christ's College when Paley was tutor there, but became a fellow of Jesus College in 1781; was ordained priest in 1783; and held a living at Madingley, a village near Cambridge, from 1783 to 1787. Becoming a convert to Unitarianism, he published, in 1788, "An Address to the Inhabitants of Cambridge . . . to turn from the False Worship of Three Persons to the Worship of the One True God." He had already been labouring to do away with subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles as a condition for the degree of M.A. Several men afterwards distinguished were his pupils, among them Malthus, the economist. In September, 1788, he was deprived of his office of tutor. He was not the man to submit without contest, for he held his principles with great tenacity. His appeal was rejected by the Bishop of Ely in December, 1788, and he left Cambridge for a time to travel on

the Continent. Returning, he renewed the struggle to maintain his academic standing. In March, 1793, began his prosecution by the authorities, which ended in his banishment from the university three years later. The master and fellows of Jesus had meanwhile cut him off from residence at that college. He appealed against both decisions unsuccessfully, but continued to enjoy the emoluments of his fellowship until his marriage, and remained a member of his college and of the university senate until his death. It is said that the undergraduates were, as would be natural in young men, favourable to his cause. Wordsworth had left the university before Frend's trial in the Vice-Chancellor's Court, but Coleridge was much excited by it, and his rooms were a centre of agitation in Frend's behalf. Wordsworth's brother Christopher, then an orthodox and severely studious undergraduate at Trinity, mentioned the case of Frend in his diary.

A fellow of Wordsworth's own college, the Rev. Herbert Marsh, in later life conspicuous for his energetic and arbitrary rule as Bishop of Peterborough, was from boyhood a confidential associate of Frend. During Wordsworth's years of residence in Cambridge he lived in Germany, whence he returned in 1792. He refused to testify against Frend, and in consequence of the trouble which this attitude occasioned withdrew once more from Cambridge to Leipzig. With his annotated translation of J. D. Michaelis's " Introduction to the New Testament " he became the first English contributor to the modern critical study of the Gospels.

These instances are sufficient to show that there was considerable intellectual ferment in Cambridge during Wordsworth's time of residence, and shortly before it. Such examples of independence, accompanied by the hazarding of livelihood and reputation, could not have been given in a place altogether stagnant. They were eddies from the great world-current of rationalism. Aberrations from the formal Cambridge type were common enough in the last decade of the century, yet it was only much later, and rather grudgingly, but still

with less timidity than Oxford showed, that Cambridge became a progressive and really modern University, hospitable to experiment and reason. Still, it meant much, in the eighteenth century, that she was the reverent disciple of her own great son, Sir Isaac Newton, who, in addition to the pre-eminence in mathematical studies which he conferred upon her, lent the sanction of his name to a remarkable liberality in Biblical criticism. His fettered ideas on the subject of prophecy have too much obscured this fact.*

Cambridge cannot be censured for not binding more closely to her one of her most distinguished sons, Henry Cavendish, who in Wordsworth's day was conducting his important scientific researches elsewhere. He was independent, shy, eccentric, and extremely rich. The poems of Erasmus Darwin, another celebrated Cambridge graduate, must have excited interest, at least, in university circles. The second part of his "Botanic Garden," entitled "Loves of the Plants," appeared in 1789, and the first part, "The Economy of Vegetation," in 1792.

Under the energetic mastership of Dr. Powell, from 1765 to 1775, St. John's College was thoroughly reformed. Provision which in our day would be ludicrously small, but which was then considered notable, was made for the teaching of science, particularly astronomy. The average number of entering students rose to forty. According to Mr. Mullinger, in his history of the college, "St. John's now gradually acquired the credit of being the only Cambridge foundation where a steady course of reading was obligatory on undergraduates," and nevertheless "the college was increas-

* As Andrew D. White says in his "History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom," Newton "decided that the Pentateuch must have been made up from several books; that Genesis was not written until the reign of Saul; that the books of Kings and Chronicles were probably collected by Ezra, and, in a curious anticipation of modern criticism, that the Book of Psalms and the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel were each written by various authors at various dates." It was impossible that these conceptions and the audacious candour which permitted Newton to express them could suffer occultation any more than the spirit and conclusions of his "Principia," especially in a place devoted no less to theology than to mathematics.

ingly resorted to by the sons of the nobility and old county families." Although morning prayers were at six o'clock, the chapel became overcrowded, the master himself setting an example of almost unbroken regularity in attendance. Under his successor, Dr. Chevallier, who was more lax, the number of admissions increased to an average of nearly fifty a year. Chevallier was followed by William Craven in 1789. Throughout all this time St. John's maintained the supremacy among Cambridge colleges for the number of its students who won honours in mathematics. This distinction more than counterbalanced the glory of Trinity in possessing Richard Porson.

This brief survey may suffice to show that if Wordsworth had been inclined to purely scholastic pursuits, particularly in theology or mathematics, he need not have complained that the atmosphere of Cambridge was uncongenial. His brother Christopher, who followed him from Hawkshead in October, 1791, certainly did not find it so. The latter was a member of Trinity College. His diary, beginning October 9, 1793, is full of attendance at lectures, conferences with tutors, conversations and debates on intellectual subjects with fellow-students, among whom was Coleridge, exercise taken with a view to mental hygiene, wide reading, and computation of the number of hours devoted to study. The following are the records of two typical days:*

"*Thurs.*, 17 [*Oct.*, 1793].—Rose to chapel. Read till one. Trigonometry (plane). In the afternoon lounged in the library. Walked with Reynolds. Drank tea at home. Read Tweddell's Panegyric on Locke. Proceeded in my syllabus of Trigonometry. Read part of Æschylus' Seven against Thebes. Bilsborrow saw the Letter in which Johnson offers Dr. Darwin £1,000 for his *Ζωονομια*, without having ever seen it. Dr. D. confesses it in his Botanic Garden, etc.; he propounds many opinions which he does not himself believe. Hayley, Bilsborrow says, is employed upon a life of Milton."

"*Wednesday*, 23.—Chapel. A Latin declamation brought to me. All morning spent in choosing a subject,

* Christopher Wordsworth: "Social Life at the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century."

finding my opponent, going to the Dean, procuring books, etc."

He was attending Wollaston's lectures and reading Euclid, plane and spherical trigonometry, mechanics, astronomy, Locke, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, not to mention Boswell's "Johnson," *The Spectator*, and the early poetical ventures of his brother and of Coleridge.

Christopher Wordsworth manifested even in his youth the qualities that made him ultimately a successful Churchman and a great academic figure. He was naturally fond of reading, and not averse from hard study for its own sake or for the sake of distinction. He was docile and orthodox, and his social inclinations were strong. The ambitions which appear to have been the mainspring of his life were decidedly practical. It is hardly necessary to say that young men of this type are the round pegs for whom the round holes of preferment are intended. If his brother had been like him, or, on the other hand, had been content to enjoy the easy tasks required and the harmless pleasures tolerated by the college and university authorities, we should have heard no complaint. But he asked of Cambridge what it is to be feared no university ever gave continuously and as a matter of course—namely, a great stimulus to the emotions, coinciding with a steady advance in knowledge and intellectual strength.

A still more instructive inference from these glimpses of Cambridge life is that the poet may have been imbued during his residence at the university with the radical opinions in religion and politics for which it has been commonly supposed that his sojourn in France was responsible. He could hardly have escaped the influence which was to be, within a year or two, very effective with Coleridge, who, without going to France, became as much a radical as Wordsworth. It was in part, no doubt, Wordsworth's sympathy with this element of Cambridge life, an element discountenanced by the authorities and practically ineffective, that kept him from feeling at home. If we could see "The Prelude"

precisely as he first dictated it, perhaps we should find this reason explicitly set forth. All that is certain, however, is that he held himself quietly aloof. He had grown up to be his own judge and master. Since his father's death he had been restrained by no authority save the mild rules of Hawkshead. He had lived much alone and out of doors, subject to a grander discipline, and seeking nobler rewards than those of any school. His heart, which had expanded generously, as we have seen, in the society of other boys and of simple rustics, closed upon its tender secrets in the unaccustomed air of a larger place. An uneasy wonder, not real admiration, took the place of those deep satisfactions, those unquestioning acceptances, that filled his mind among his native mountains. He half regretted, half cherished, the consciousness of being different from the young men about him, and of being out of sympathy with the spirit of the university. It was not merely disdain that taught him to feel he

> was not for that hour,
> Nor for that place.

Wordsworth's great autobiographical poem, which towards the close of the second book becomes deeper and slower in its movement, bursts at the opening of the third into a rapid narrative, and streams along with lively interest. He records with Chaucerian simplicity his arrival on the coach, the aspect of the many-towered town, his fresh sensations, his important visits to tutor and tailor, and the welcome given him by old Hawkshead boys, "now hung round with honour and importance":

> I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed
> Delighted through the motley spectacle;
> Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
> Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:
> Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
> A northern villager.*

He occupied rooms, since demolished, in the beautiful First Court, which were over the kitchens, and looked

* "Prelude," III. 29.

out upon the chapel of Trinity. From his bedroom window he

> could behold
> The antechapel where the statue stood
> Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
> The marble index of a mind for ever
> Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.*

The routine of lectures and examinations failed from the very first to awaken his interest. He was untouched by the excessive hopes, small jealousies, and triumphs, of student life. Yet he was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts about his future worldly maintenance, which depressed him amid the crowd of eager aspirants. And then he did for himself what he has since done for thousands—he strengthened his heart by communing with nature. It is a hackneyed phrase, but to him it represented a most real and important experience. As he paced along the level fields of Cambridgeshire, far from the grander scenes that had inspired his boyhood, he felt even there an uplifting of his mind and a sense that all was well—felt what independent solaces were his

> To mitigate the injurious sway of place
> Or circumstance.

He looked for universal things, called on them to be his teachers, gave a moral life even to the loose stones that covered the highway, "saw them feel, or linked them to some feeling." "The great mass," he says,

> Lay bedded in a quickened soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning.

This first reaction against human conventions, including the standards of university excellence, carried him to a pitch of conscious elevation probably never reached by him before. He flung himself upon nature, fearing that she might not be the same in these less lovely regions, and found her ready as ever to soothe and exalt. He enjoyed moments of ecstasy—moments

* "Prelude," III. 59.

when the currents from nature's life flowed unobstructed through the soul:*

> whate'er of Terror or of Love
> Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on
> From transitory passion, unto this
> I was as sensitive as waters are
> To the sky's influence in a kindred mood
> Of passion; was obedient as a lute
> That waits upon the touches of the wind.

He could then return and look unabashed at the memorials of intellectual greatness that admonished him from their honourable niches in college gateways or their gilded frames in college halls.

What wonder if he held himself somewhat apart from his companions! It was not easy for him to come down to their level, and evidently in his first year he acted strangely. They thought him mad, and so, he says, he was indeed,†

> If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
> By poets in old time, or higher up
> By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
> May in these tutored days no more be seen
> With undisordered sight.

But as proof that his vision of Oneness was no blear illusion, he asserts that at this time his analytic powers were keen and active. He perceived not only similitudes, but differences. He might have said, with William Blake, "every Minute Particular is holy." He is anxious to avert the charge that he was too attentive to generalities, and therefore incapable of that direct sense of the actual and individual which is common to men. He is concerned to show that in so far, at least, he was not unaffected by the logical severity which was supposed to dominate Cambridge thought, and so he continues:

> It was no madness, for the bodily eye
> Amid my strongest workings evermore
> Was searching out the lines of difference
> As they lie hid in all external forms,

* "Prelude," III. 133. † *Ibid.*, 150.

> Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye
> Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
> To the broad ocean and the azure heavens
> Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
> Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
> Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
> And by an unrelenting agency
> Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

Yet in an apostrophe to Coleridge,* with whom, no doubt, he had often discussed the nature of inspiration, he admits that this eminence to which he occasionally attained could not be held. It was the glory of his youth, it was "genius, power, creation, divinity itself." And in lines which none but he could have written, lines that are an epitome of his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," he cries

> O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls,
> And what they do within themselves while yet
> The yoke of earth is new to them!

But the subject, he declares, is beyond his power of expression; we all have points within our souls where our experiences are unique; and all his efforts are but

> Breathings for incommunicable powers

— that is, panting exertions to express what every human being is doomed to keep to himself. Yet he is not disheartened by his failure, for every man has "known his god-like hours," and can fill the gap out of his own inheritance.

Gradually he adapted himself more to the ideals of the place, and began to take part in its enjoyments. His heart, he tells us, was social, and if a throng was near, that way he inclined. He welcomed new acquaintances, made friends, sauntered, talked, drifted about the streets and walks, read lazily in trivial books, rode horseback, and sailed boisterously on the river. With no one did he share his deeper thoughts. He scarcely gave them definite form in his own mind, and made no attempt

* "Prelude," III. 167.

to express them in writing. Now and then he forced himself to work at the appointed tasks, and felt a faint hope of success. We must not suppose that he was really as neglectful of classical studies as "The Prelude" might lead us to think. In later life he showed evidence of fairly wide and accurate reading in classical authors, and prepared his son for college. And yet, for him, as indeed for many minds, there could be no complete absorption in work unless imagination led the way. And imagination, he says, slept, though not utterly. Had he been more mature in scholarship, or more experienced, he might have been moved, as Goethe was moved, by the contrast between active life and the systems of speculative idealism which were echoing on their way from Berkeley to Kant. Or he might have been thus early aroused, as Lessing and Voltaire were aroused, to shoulder his responsibility in the warfare between rationalism and mysticism. It is to sceptical impulses, perhaps, that he refers when he mentions with annoyance*

> a treasonable growth
> Of indecisive judgments, that impaired
> And shook the mind's simplicity.

The English universities in his day were not, in a broad sense, national institutions. They were organs of the Church of England. Much of their mediæval character as groups of religious houses still survived. The clergy were conspicuous in almost all high academic posts, and a steady circulation between fellowships and church livings in the gift of colleges was maintained In academic groups religious and political doubt were treated with the disgust due to filial ingratitude. Wordsworth, if he doubted, was too simple-hearted to resent this feeling and to realize its impertinence.

After all, the most memorable pages of the third book of "The Prelude" are those which recall the deep floods of reverence that flowed into the young poet's soul when he remembered his illustrious predecessors, Newton Chaucer, Spenser, Milton. In those precincts he could

* "Prelude," III. 211.

not move and sleep and wake untouched by their ennobling influence. "I could not lightly pass," he says,*

> Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
> Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
> That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.

In the neighbouring village of Trumpington he "laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade." In lines that exquisitely imitate the music of his great Brother, Englishman, and Friend, he records how he hailed

> Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
> With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace.

Milton, "soul awful," he says,

> Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
> Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
> A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
> Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
> And conscious step of purity and pride.

One of his acquaintances occupied Milton's rooms in Christ's College, and there, on a dark winter evening, betrayed by enthusiasm, he poured out libations to his memory,

> till pride
> And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
> Never excited by the fumes of wine
> Before that hour, or since,

and in fear of being too late for evening prayers he ran ostrich-like through the streets, with flowing gown, and, shouldering up his surplice with careless ostentation, hurried through the antechapel of St. John's.†

Those mighty dead roused his enthusiasm, but through his own fault, as he admits, failed to stir in him

> A fervent love of rigorous discipline.

What he missed was some compelling force which should break the light composure of his easy spirits and bend him to a task demanding all his efforts. He did not slight his books, but he knew full well that he possessed

* "Prelude," III. 261. † *Ibid.*, 275-321.

powers that might have been exerted to great purpose had the passion for study been awakened in him. Other passions already filled his mind, passions engendered by crystalline rivers and solemn heights, lovely forms that left less space for learning's soberer visions.

Out of these regrets he framed, later, an ideal of a place of learning " whose studious aspect " should have bent him down " to instantaneous service," a place where the gregarious instincts should be turned to the highest account in a generous co-operation, where knowledge should be prized for its own sake, where youth, under the impulse of a truly religious zeal, should stand abashed*

> Before antiquity and steadfast truth
> And strong book-mindedness; and over all
> A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
> A seemly plainness, name it what you will,
> Republican or pious.

He fancied that the universities possessed such a character in the Renaissance,†

> When all who dwelt within these famous walls
> Led in abstemiousness a studious life,

when princes froze at matins and peasants' sons begged their way from remote villages, journeying to these centres of learning " with ponderous folios in their hands," and illustrious scholars,

> Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
> Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
> Before the doors or windows of their cells
> By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

The glorious dream is by no means vain. It may yet be realized, and Wordsworth was right in thinking that poverty, compulsory or voluntary, with the plainness that poverty entails, is one of the first conditions of its fulfilment. The religion of such a place, upon which it will depend wholly for dignity, grace, integrity, and inspiration, must, however, be a faith in those things

* " Prelude," III. 394. † *Ibid.*, 446-478.

which are recognized by the best spirits of the times as the supremely good things. A mediæval or a seventeenth-century type of religion will not vivify a modern university. Nowhere is there a more disastrous effect on morality than in a college or school whose real religion does not heartily support its ceremonial of worship. In a vein of fervent satire Wordsworth comments on the practice of compulsory chapel services, which the younger members of his college attended unwillingly and the older members very irregularly or not at all. "Be wise," he says,*

> Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit
> Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained
> At home in pious service, to your bells
> Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
> Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
> And your officious doings bring disgrace
> On the plain steeples of our English Church,
> Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees,
> Suffers for this.

All authority, he held, was weakened by the irreverence produced by this forced attendance, and even Science was "smitten thence with an unnatural taint."

He was impatient, too, of the narrow range of scholastic studies. Modern subjects attracted him, and he spent much time reading in branches not recognized as part of the official course. He learned Italian. His private tutor, Agostino Isola, a native of Milan, whence he had fled for political reasons, had taught Gray in his time. Isola's granddaughter, Emma, was adopted, or at least brought up in part, by Charles and Mary Lamb. Wordsworth was never a discursive reader. More intense study would have suited him better, and he does indeed mention, with minute and curious detail, the way in which geometry strengthened and elevated his mind. He was wont to meditate on the relations its abstractions bear as between man's intellect on the one hand,

* "Prelude," III. 409.

and the starry systems on the other. From the same source he says he drew*

> A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
> Of permanent and universal sway,

and thus a recognition of God, which comforted him with transcendent peace. He craved discipline and insight, not experience, and so, in the large part of "The Prelude" devoted to his education, few books—the doors to experience—are mentioned, even in the canto entitled "Books." It is significant, too, that almost the only books he mentions in connection with this time—and with great delight—are "The Arabian Nights" and "Don Quixote," which pleased him, evidently, by their extravagance and fancifulness, more than for any outlook on reality they offered. His very considerable acquaintance with books of travel was gained later, perhaps as a relief from too much concentration, and because he had, as he said, a passion for wandering.

After the manner of undergraduates, he derived much amusement from the oddities of his seniors. "Rich pastime," he found it, to observe "the grave Elders, men unscoured, grotesque in character," with so little to do that they fell into random and strange practices. The employment of what is termed "academic leisure" creates bewilderment in the young. This is especially the case when apparent idleness is not disconnected with academic distinction. Wordsworth was perhaps more tender than his fellow-students in his criticism of the old dons, for he remembered the aged shepherds of the hills, and found that, though different in expression, the eccentricities of age were essentially the same in Cambridge as in Hawkshead. But he scourges the system which encouraged a rapid decline into uselessness; and thinking of the "old humourists" who sat at the college high tables in his youth, he bursts into an indignant passage.†

At the end of his first college year he had no home to go to, and turned eagerly towards Hawkshead. His old

* "Prelude," VI. 130. † *Ibid.*, III. 591-608.

dame welcomed him with almost a mother's pride. He re-entered her cottage with the assurance of a son. Language failed him in which to express the complex feelings that filled his heart on this occasion, as he recognized a hundred once familiar objects, beholding everything in duplicate, its present aspect mingling strangely with its remembered form. The richest part of this experience is seeing one's old self peeping unexpectedly at its new playfellow. No one can communicate to anyone else more than the barest outline of what the first home-coming after a long absence means to an imaginative person, and although the fourth book of "The Prelude" is probably the most successful attempt to do so ever made, the poet asks as in despair:

> Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts
> Have felt, and every man alive can guess?

He greeted the rooms, the court, the garden of Dame Tyson's dwelling, and the unruly brook boxed up in its paved channel, which was an emblem of his own mountain origin and recent restraint. He hailed old friends at their work, or on the roads, or across fields. He felt embarrassed among his old schoolmates because of his fashionable dress. He took his place with delight at the domestic table, and, after a day of many sensations, laid him down in the lowly accustomed bed whence he "had heard the wind roar and the rain beat hard," and oft

> Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
> The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
> Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;
> Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro
> In the dark summit of the waving tree
> She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.*

After this first riot of boyish spirits the ferment of poetry revived in him, and, accompanied by an old favourite, a rough hill terrier, he wandered in the country, "harassed with the toil of verse," rushing forward boyishly to pat the dog when some lovely

* "Prelude," IV. 87.

DAME TYSON'S COTTAGE, HAWKSHEAD

From a photograph by Walmsley

[Vol. I., p. 72

image rose full-formed in the song, and putting on the air of a mere saunterer if the animal gave warning of approaching passengers. By contrast with the fens of Cambridgeshire, the lakes and hills seemed more beautiful than ever. That he had felt their beauty a year before, when as yet he had never lived outside the circle of their power, is proof of his inborn distinction of spirit, for not every son of the mountains is aware of the majesty that surrounds him. Now to this original realization was added the result of comparison. He recognized the peculiar appeal of these old haunts which had once seemed a whole world to him. He felt, with pensive sympathy, that even this beauty must be transient.*

With clearer knowledge than of old, he was now able to read, also, the characters of his former companions, the dalesmen and their children. He found a freshness in human life. He observed with increased respect the daily occupations which he really loved. They had gained dignity in the eyes of one who had been puzzling vainly over the mystery of endowed leisure. The peaceful scene,

> Changed like a garden in the heat of spring
> After an eight days' absence,

filled him with surprise. Many things which before had seemed natural now began to take their places in the order of conventional society. He saw with his own unclouded eye of childhood, and at the same time with the eye of the world. In this first long vacation many a day was

> Spent in a round of strenuous idleness.

He flung himself into the innocent gaieties of country life, "feast, and dance, and public revelry." This course he afterwards, taking himself strictly to task, regretted. Like Rousseau, Wordsworth believed that the development of the child should be held back until adolescence, and that then, in a few crowded years or

* "Prelude," IV. 231-247.

even months, the reasoning powers should be subjected to rigorous discipline, the imagination enriched, and purposes ennobled. He therefore looked back with some disapproval on the waste of many golden hours at that important time. For, he declared, except some casual knowledge of character or life, he gained no real experience;*

> Far better had it been to exalt the mind
> By solitary study, to uphold
> Intense desire through meditative peace.

Yet one hour of profound insight set the balance straight. It was the hour of his baptism with the fire of poesy, an hour memorable in his life and in the history of literature. It was the supreme religious moment of his life, the point when solitude closed in on all sides of him, and his being stood cut off for the first time from every other human soul, distinct in conscious self-hood; the point, too, when by this very isolation his soul lay bare to divine influence and he communed with God, submissive to the heavenly voice. He then accepted—he could not help accepting—the call of a power beyond his control. And from that time his faculties were released. The incident does not admit of paraphrase, and must be read in his own words,† the momentous conclusion being:

> bond unknown to me
> Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit.

As Mr. Thomas Hutchinson has remarked,‡ Wordsworth may at this time have spent a month with his cousin, Mrs. Barker, at the village of Rampside, on the Lancashire coast, opposite Peel Castle, for in his "Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle," composed in 1805, he sings:

> I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!
> Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee;

and at no other period of his life could this have been the case, except, perhaps, the summer of 1794.

* "Prelude," IV. 304. † *Ibid.*, 309-338.
‡ Oxford edition of Wordsworth's "Poetical Works," p. xxvi.

There is nothing in "The Prelude" or in any published letters of the Wordsworth family to indicate that the young collegian spent any part of this first long vacation with his sister, or elsewhere than at Hawkshead. But it is, of course, extremely probable that he visited her at Penrith, to which his good long legs would easily carry him in a day. He had been with her before going to Cambridge, in October, 1787. She had bravely helped to get him ready for the journey, and then fallen back in mute despair into a lonely life. She was made to feel her dependence upon her grandparents and her uncle Christopher. Her duties in the mercer shop were uncongenial, and were not lightened by much sympathy. Her grandmother's eye was on her there, and she could not indulge her love of reading. The grandfather was ill and cross. There was not in all England a spirit naturally more gladsome than Dorothy Wordsworth's, nor a constitution that called so eagerly as hers did for space and exercise and change. Two passions possessed her wholly—love of nature and love of her brothers; and at sixteen she was cut off from both nature and her brothers. Her mobile apprehension had to accommodate its pace to the torpid current of events in a small market-town. Her tameless enthusiasm was checked by the disapproval of a commonplace family. There exist two letters which she wrote from Penrith to a girl friend, Jane Pollard, of Halifax, before William went to Cambridge. They are remarkable productions for a child of fifteen. The handwriting is that of a person accustomed to rapid composition. It is neither unformed nor "commercial." The style is singularly correct, and flexible enough to express a wide range of anger, affection, and playfulness. The words flow as from a pent-up fountain. Never was there a heart more eager to love. It is worth remarking, as a distinguishing trait and a noble one, that, while craving a chance to bestow her love, she expresses little anxiety about being loved. Possibly some abatement from what she writes about her gloom and its causes should be made on the ground that she takes an artistic pleasure

in describing them. In the first letter, which is dated merely "Sunday evening," but apparently was written at Penrith in the summer of 1787, excusing herself for negligence, she says:*

"On Thursday night I began writing, but my brother William was sitting by me, and I could not help talking with him till it was too late to finish. . . . I might perhaps have employed an hour or two in writing to you, but I have so few, so very few, to pass with my brothers that I could not leave them. You know how happy I am in their company. I do not now want a friend who will share with me my distresses. I do not now pass half my time alone. I can bear the ill-nature of all my relations, for the affection of my brothers consoles me in all my griefs; but how soon, alas! shall I be deprived of this consolation, and how soon shall I then become melancholy, even more melancholy than before! They are just the boys I could wish them, they are so affectionate and so kind to me as makes me love them more and more every day. William and Christopher are very clever boys, at least so they appear in the partial eyes of a sister. No doubt I am partial and see virtues in them that by everybody else will pass unnoticed. John, who is to be the sailor, has a most excellent heart. He is not so bright as either William or Christopher, but he has very good common sense, and is well calculated for the profession he has chosen. Richard, the eldest, I have seen. He is equally affectionate and good, but is far from being as clever as William, but I have no doubt of his succeeding in his business, for he is very diligent and far from being dull. He only spent a night with us. Many a time have William, John, Christopher and myself shed tears together, tears of the bitterest sorrow. We all of us each day feel more sensibly the loss we sustained when we were deprived of our parents, and each day do we receive fresh insults. You will wonder of what sort. Believe me of the most mortifying kind—the insults of servants. . . . I was for a whole week kept in expectation of my brothers, who stayed at school all that time after the vacation began owing to the ill-nature of my uncle, who would not send horses for them, because when they wrote they did not mention them, and only said when they should break up,

* From the original manuscript in the possession of Mr. Frank E. Marshall, Jane Pollard's grandson.

which was always before sufficient. This was the beginning of my mortifications, for I feel that, if they had had another home to go to, they would have been behaved to in a very different manner and received with more cheerful countenances. Indeed, nobody but myself expressed one wish to see them. At last, however, they were sent for, but not till my brother William had hired a horse for himself, and come over because he thought some one must be ill. The servants are every one of them so insolent to us as makes the kitchen as well as the parlour quite insupportable. James has even gone so far as to tell us that we had nobody to depend upon but my grandfather, for that our fortunes were very, very small; and my brothers cannot even get a pair of shoes cleaned without James telling them they require as much waiting upon as any 'gentleman,' nor can I get a thing done for myself without absolutely entreating it as a favour. James happens to be a particular favourite with my uncle Kit, who has taken a dislike to my brothers and never takes any notice of any of us, so that he thinks while my uncle behaves in this way to us he may do anything. We are found fault with every hour of the day, both by the servants and my grandfather and grandmother, the former of whom never speaks to us but when he scolds, which is not seldom. I dare say our fortunes have been weighed thousands of times at the tea-table in the kitchen, and I have no doubt they always conclude their conversations with 'They have nothing to be proud of.' Our fortunes will, I fear, be very small, as Lord Lonsdale will most likely only pay a very small part of his debt, which is £4,700. My uncle Kit (who is our guardian) having said many disrespectful things of him, and having always espoused the cause of the Duke of Norfolk, has incensed him so much that I fear we shall feel through life the effects of his imprudence. We shall, however, have sufficient to educate my brothers. John, poor fellow! says that he shall have occasion for very little, £200 will be sufficient to fit him out, and he should wish William to have the rest for his education, as he has a wish to be a lawyer if his health will permit, and it will be very expensive. We shall have, I believe, about £600 apiece, if Lord Lonsdale does not pay. It is but very little, but it will be quite enough for my brothers' education, and after they are once put forward in the world there is little doubt of their succeeding, and for me while they live

I shall never want a friend. Oh, Jane! when they have left me I shall be quite unhappy. I shall long more ardently than ever for you, my dearest, dearest friend. We have been told thousands of times that we were liars, but we treat such behaviour with the contempt it deserves. We always finish our conversations, which generally take a melancholy train, with wishing we had a father and a home. Oh, Jane! I hope it may be long ere you experience the loss of your parents, but till you feel that loss you will never know how dear to you your sisters are."

The uncle mentioned in this letter, Christopher Crackanthorpe Cookson, was the brother of the poet's mother. On his own mother's death, in 1792, he took the surname of Crackanthorpe instead of Cookson, and became Christopher Crackanthorpe Crackanthorpe.

The second letter bears the Penrith stamp, and was evidently written late in the summer or early in the autumn of 1787. It is dated merely "Monday evening, 10 o'clock."*

"Yesterday morning I parted from the kindest and most affectionate of brothers. I cannot paint to you my distress at their departure. For a few hours I was absolutely miserable. A thousand tormenting fears rushed upon me—the approaching winter, the ill-nature of my grandfather and uncle Christopher, the little probability there is of my soon again seeing my youngest brother, and still less likelihood of my revisiting my Halifax friends, in quick succession filled my mind. . . . [She tells how she has to look for chances to write, avoiding her grandmother's watchful eye. There is something merely romantic, but also perhaps something morbid and overstrained, in all this.] A gentleman of my father's intimate acquaintance, who is not worth less than two or three thousand pounds a year, and who always professed himself to be the real friend of my father, refused to pay a bill of £700 to his children without considerable reductions. . . . I am sure as long as my brothers have a farthing in their pockets I shall never want. My brother William goes to Cambridge in October, but he will be at Penrith before his departure. He wishes very much to be a lawyer, if his health will

* From the original manuscript in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

permit, but he is troubled with violent headaches and a pain in his side, but I hope they will leave him in a little while. You must not be surprised if you see him at Halifax in a short time. I think he will not be able to call there on his way to Cambridge, as my uncle William [the Rev. William Cookson] and a young gentleman who is going to the same college will accompany him. When I wrote to you last I had some faint hopes that he might have been permitted to stay with me till October. You may guess how much I was mortified and vexed at his being obliged to go away. I absolutely dislike my uncle Kit. He never speaks a pleasant word to one, and behaves to my brother William in a particularly ungenerous manner. . . . I have a very pretty collection of books from my brothers, which they have given me. I will give you a catalogue. I have the Iliad and Odyssey, Pope's Works, Fielding's Works, Hayley's poems, Gil Blas, Dr. Gregory's letters to his daughters; and my brother Richard intends sending me Shakespeare's plays and the Spectator. I have also Milton's works, Dr. Goldsmith's poems, etc. . . . I am determined to do a great deal now both in French and English. My grandmother sits in the shop in the afternoons, and by working particularly hard for one hour I think I may read the next without being discovered. I rise pretty early in the morning, so I hope in time to have perused them all. I am at present reading the Iliad, and like it very much. My brother William read part of it."

After these formidable projects it is pleasant to read a feminine description of her looks: " I am so little, and wish to appear as girlish as possible; I wear my hair curled about my face in light curls frizzed at the bottom and turned at the ends."

In another letter, written late in the autumn, occurs a more particular description: " My grandmother is now gone to bed, and I am quite alone. Imagine me sitting in my bed-gown, my hair out of curl and hanging about my face, with a small candle beside me, and my whole person the picture of poverty (as it always is in a bed-gown), and you will then see your friend Dorothy. It is after 11 o'clock. I begin to find myself very sleepy, and I have my hair to curl, so I must bid my very dear friend a Good-night."

One perceives that, after all, "poverty," a dragon grandmother, and the dreadful necessity of writing letters at eleven o'clock at night, were not without a certain romantic delightfulness to this young lady.

A few weeks later, as the autumn evenings lengthened, she wrote to her friend with bitterer feeling:*

"I often wish for you. I think how happy we could be together notwithstanding the cold insensibility of my grandmother and the ill-nature of my grandfather. . . . Never till I came to Penrith did I feel the loss I sustained when I was deprived of a father. One would imagine that a grandmother would feel for her grandchild all the tenderness of a mother, particularly when that grandchild had no other parent; but there is so little of tenderness in her manner, or of anything affectionate, that while I am in her house I cannot at all consider myself as at home. I feel like a stranger. You cannot think how gravely and silently I sit with her and my grandfather—you would scarcely know me. You are well acquainted that I was never remarkable for taciturnity, but now I sit for whole hours without saying anything excepting that I have an old shirt to mend; then my grandmother and I have to set our heads together and contrive the most notable way of doing it, which I daresay in the end we always hit upon, but really the contrivance itself takes up more time than the shirt is worth. Our only conversation is about *work, work*, or what sort of a servant such a one's is, who are her parents, what places she lived in, why she left them, etc., etc. What, my dear Jane, can be more uninteresting than such conversation as this? Yet I am obliged to set upon the occasion as *notable* a face as if I was delighted with it and that nothing could be more agreeable to me. Notability is preached up to me every day. Such an one is a very *sedate, clever, notable* girl—says my grandmother. My grandmother's taste and mine so ill agree that there is not one person who is a favourite with her that I do not dislike. . . . I now see so many of those useful people in their own imaginations, the *notables*, that I have quite an aversion to every one who bears that character. . . . I often go to the Cowpers and like Miss D. C. better than ever. I wish my uncle and she would marry. [She means her

* From the original manuscript in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

favourite uncle, the Rev. William Cookson, who did marry Miss Cowper, on October 17, 1788.] . . . I am now writing beside that uncle I so much love. He is a friend to whom next to my aunt I owe the greatest obligations. Every day gives me new proofs of his affection, and every day I like him better than I did before. I am now with him two hours every morning, from nine till eleven. I then read and write French, and learn arithmetic. When I am a good arithmetician I am to learn geography. I sit in his room when we have a fire. . . . I had my brother William with me for three weeks. I was very busy during his stay, preparing him for Cambridge, so that I had very little leisure, and what I had you may be sure I wished to spend with him. I have heard from my brother William since his arrival at Cambridge. He spent three or four days at York upon the road."

In her next letter to Miss Pollard, dated Friday, December 17, she refers to a copy of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems, published the year before. William " had read it, and admired many of the pieces very much, and promised to get it for me at the book-club, which he did." She found the Address to a Louse " very comical," and the one to a Mountain Daisy " very pretty." But she longs for liberty.

" Oh, Jane, Jane," she cries,* " that I could but see you! how happy, how very happy, we should be! I really think that for an hour after our meeting there would nothing pass betwixt us but tears of joy, fits of laughter, and unconnected exclamations, such as ' Oh Jane!' ' Oh Dolly!' It is now seven months since we parted. What a long time! We have never been separated so long for these nine years. I shall soon have been here a year, and in two years more I am determined I will come to Halifax if I cannot sooner, but I hope my uncle William is now on the road to preferment. If I do not flatter myself without having any right, he will soon be married. I must certainly in a little time go to see him, and then I shall visit Halifax. . . . I daresay *you* look forward with pleasure to the approaching season; I am sorry to say I cannot. Believe me, my

* From the original manuscript, which has been partly reproduced, with an incorrect date, in " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 5.

dear Jane, I wish you many merry evenings and agreeable dances. I shall often think of you, and flatter myself that on Christmas Day, which you know is my birthday, you will cast a melancholy thought upon your friend Dorothy. . . . The assemblies are indeed begun, but they are no amusement for me. There was one on Wednesday evening, where there were a number of ladies, but alas! only six gentlemen, so two ladies were obliged to dance together."

In a letter to Miss Pollard, written apparently in January, 1788, she mentions the recent sudden death of her grandfather. More than once, writing of her brothers—Richard in London, William at Cambridge, Christopher at Hawkshead, and John, sailing now to the West Indies, now to the East—she exclaims, "How we are squandered abroad!" Her ardent nature yearned for affection and intimacy. At last her uncle William married Miss Cowper, and was appointed rector of Forncett, near Long Stretton, in Norfolk. Thither they went in December, 1788, taking the happy girl with them. Writing to Jane from Norwich, where they stayed a few days in December, 1788, before settling at Forncett, she says: "I have now nothing left to wish for on my own account. Every day gives me fresh proofs of my uncle and aunt's goodness. . . . My happiness was very unexpected. When my uncle told me, I was almost mad with joy. I cried and laughed alternately. It was in a walk with him that it was communicated to me."

On the way they had stopped for a few hours at Cambridge, where she greatly admired the buildings, and walked with delight in the college courts and groves. She thought it odd to see the "smart powdered heads" of the students, "with black caps like helmets, only that they had a square piece of wood at the top, and gowns something like those that clergymen wear," but she considered the costume "exceedingly becoming." She saw her brother there.

For about four years Forncett rectory was to be her home, until what she called "the day of my felicity, the

day on which I am to find a home under the same roof as my brother." She was so happy with her uncle and aunt, and so busy gardening, raising poultry, teaching the country children, visiting the sick, and reading, that only one desire was left unsatisfied—the desire to be with William. This longing, however, grew until it drove every other thought from her mind. She wrote about him and to him with the warmth and abandonment of a lover. Her occasional journeys to the North, to Halifax, Sockburn, and Penrith, only revived his memory. Her visits to Windsor, where her uncle was occasionally on duty as a canon of the Chapel Royal, and where she saw many grand people and was introduced to the royal family, only increased her admiration and solicitude for the plain young republican.

He who has not lingered in the Lake country till far into the autumn cannot realize the meaning of Wordsworth's lines at the opening of the sixth book of "The Prelude," in which he relates that he turned his face

> from the coves and heights
> Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern;
> Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence
> Of calmer lakes and louder streams.

The golden bracken and the voice of full-fed streams are nature's signals to depart. They remind the visitor that summer is gone and winter at hand. Wordsworth, as one not yet fitted to dwell uninterruptedly in this retreat, went back willingly enough to Cambridge. But though refreshed and cheerful, he withdrew now for the first time in his life into something like solitude. He read copiously, but without a settled plan. He troubled himself very little about the prescribed studies, except from a sense of duty to his friends and kindred. He knew he was a poet, and was calmly happy in the present sense of joy and the certain anticipation of future power. In those days he first dared to hope that he might leave behind him some monument "which pure hearts should reverence." The analogy with Milton is evident, and

perhaps Milton's example gave him courage. He declares* that

> the dread awe
> Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
> Approachable, admitting fellowship
> Of modest sympathy.

Such boldness did the *alma mater* of Spenser, Marlowe, Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Milton, Crashaw, Herrick, Herbert, Cowley, and Gray, instil into her nursling. All winter long it was his habit to walk in the groves of his college in the evening till the nine o'clock bell summoned him to go indoors. The human beauty of Cambridge, her peculiar blending of quiet, unobtrusive, and half-rural simplicity with some of the noblest monuments of Gothic architecture to be found in the world, charmed him in spite of himself. His three sonnets "Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge," are sufficient evidence that he was neither unappreciative nor ungrateful. And no doubt his mind, "in hours of fear or grovelling thought," sought refuge in the memory of that "glorious work of fine intelligence."

Yet we have only two poems, originally one, but printed as two, of which it is known with certainty that he composed them at Cambridge. These are the "Lines written while sailing in a Boat at Evening" and the three additional stanzas entitled "Remembrance of Collins," in which he has arbitrarily changed the scene to the Thames.

His second summer vacation, that of 1789, was spent in the north again. He explored Dovedale in Derbyshire, and some of the valleys in western Yorkshire and hidden tracts of his own native region. Between these wanderings he was blessed, he tells us, with a joy "that seemed another morn risen on mid-noon," the presence of his sister, from whom he had been so long separated that "she seemed a gift then first bestowed." At their age time had wrought many changes in both of them, all tending to make them more interesting in each other's eyes. She had returned

* "Prelude," VI. 59.

from Forncett to Penrith or to Penrith and Halifax for the summer. She was now old enough to take some of the freedom from household restraints which she had longed for, and under her brother's charge she visited the many romantic scenes within easy reach of Penrith. Side by side they strolled along the banks of Emont, and climbed among the ruins of Brougham Castle, thinking of Sidney, who, as tradition said, penned there snatches of his "Arcadia," which was written for his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. Here they clambered up broken stairs and out into the sunlight on ridges of fractured walls, to lie on an old turret,*

> Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
> Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,
> Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.

The long companionship, the deep and unbroken communion of spirits, really began in this happy season. It was then, too, that he first felt the stirrings of affection for Mary Hutchinson, his sister's friend, to him at that time †

> By her exulting outside look of youth
> And placid under-countenance, first endeared.

Their haunts were the high hill beyond Penrith called the Beacon, on which the signal fires used to blaze in times of Border warfare, and the crags and pools on the bare fell, and the shady woods and lanes of eglantine, whence he gathered thoughts of love —

> The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.

In their wanderings they passed the spot where, as a child, he had once been struck with sombre fear by its loneliness and the remembered story of an execution. Now, "in the blessed hours of early love," and with the loved one by his side, the same melancholy place gave him only joy, for

> The mind is lord and master—outward sense
> The obedient servant of her will.

* "Prelude," VI. 221. † *Ibid.*, 226.

It is difficult to believe that this awakening of interest in Mary Hutchinson, in the summer of 1789, deepened at once into the passion of love. Many years, filled with other associations, were to intervene between this idyll and their marriage in 1802. Wordsworth's ardour and self-will were so intense that, had he at this time really loved, he would have been unlikely to suppress his feelings. It is to be supposed, also, that in such case more frequent mention of Miss Hutchinson would have been made in Dorothy Wordsworth's letters to Miss Pollard.

In one of these, written at Forncett, January 25, 1790, she says:

"My brother John, I imagine, sailed for India on Saturday or Sunday in the 'Earl of Abergavenny.' He wrote to me the other day in excellent spirits. William is at Cambridge, Richard in London, Kit at Hawkshead. How we are squandered abroad!" She tells about her little voluntary school of nine pupils, and adds this interesting paragraph: "Mr. Wilberforce has been with us rather better than a month. Tell your father I hope he will give him his vote at the next general election. I believe him to be one of the best of men. He allows me ten guineas a year to distribute in what manner I think best to the poor."

Defending herself from Miss Pollard's insinuation that Mr. W. (Wilberforce?) may have come as a suitor, she says, in a letter of March 30, 1790, "Your way of accounting for my absence of mind diverted me exceedingly. I will set forward with assuring you that my heart is perfectly disengaged, and then endeavour to show you how very improbable it is that Mr. W. would think of me. As to the first point, I can only say that no man I have seen has appeared to regard me with any degree of partiality, nor has anyone gained my affections." She says she is reading Pope's works, and a little treatise on Regeneration, which, with Mrs. Trimmer's "Œconomy of Charity," Mr. Wilberforce had given her. She is going to read the New Testament with Doddridge's exposition. In this letter

we find her first mention of her brother's future wife: "The seal you showed so much sagacity in your conjectures about was given me by a Penrith friend, Mary Hutchinson." Of her brother she writes: "I long to have an opportunity of introducing you to my dear William. I am very anxious about him just now, as he will shortly have to provide for himself. Next year he takes his degree. When he will go into orders I do not know, nor how he will employ himself. He must, when he is three-and-twenty, either go into orders or take pupils. He will be twenty in April."

It must not be inferred from the expression "provide for himself" that her brother was being educated at the expense of her uncles. His own share of his parents' estates would be sufficient to pay for his education, though, until the money came in, his uncles were probably obliged to advance part of the sum required. But at best, if Lord Lonsdale should pay his debt and all other business matters should be satisfactorily settled, very little would remain for William and Christopher after deducting their college expenses. We find Dorothy writing as follows on December 7, 1791 :*

"Our grandmother has shown us great kindness, and has promised to give us five hundred pounds (£100 apiece), the first time she receives her rents. . . . Our several resources are these: £500 which my grandmother is to give us, £500 which is due on account of my mother's fortune, about £200 which my uncle Kit owes us, and £1,000 at present in the hands of our guardians, and about £150 which we are to receive out of the Newbiggin estate, with what may be adjudged as due to us from Lord Lonsdale. My brother Richard has about £100 per annum, and William has received his education, for which a reduction will be made; so that I hope, unless we are treated in the must unjust manner possible, my three younger brothers and I will have £1,000 apiece, deducting in William's share the expense of his education."

If the young collegian could have made up his mind to be a clergyman, his connection with his uncle Cook-

* Erroneously printed "1790" in Professor Knight's "Letters of the Wordsworth Family." From the original manuscript.

son would probably have helped him to a church "living." But doubtless the taint communicated to the profession by its dependence on worldly favour and the patronage of the rich rendered it unattractive to his pure and generous mind. It was possible for a young graduate, with little more theological reading than that required for the general degree of Bachelor of Arts, to be placed almost at once in a curacy. Of course, standing in the university affected a candidate's chances of securing what is known as a "good" living—that is, one with a large salary.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPEN ROAD

THE academic year, or at least that part of it in which residence was required, being only about half the calendar year, students who expected to distinguish themselves in the examinations were accustomed to spend their final long vacation in hard study, either at Cambridge or in some quieter place. Wordsworth's relatives, therefore, were disappointed when he decided to make use of the summer and early autumn of 1790 in a way which apparently would not lead to academic honours nor to a profession nor to pecuniary profit. It was most natural, however, that Wordsworth, in his unsettled state of mind, should yield to his love of landscape and his fondness for walking, and hasten as soon as possible from the indoor restraints and the bookishness of the university. And the events then occurring with such good augury in France would arouse the hopeful curiosity of an open-minded and democratic youth. Undergraduate society at Cambridge was on the whole liberal as compared with the tone of thought in most of the homes from which the students came, and Wordsworth was, as we have seen, predisposed by his Hawkshead life to practise, if not to profess, a belief in human equality. Nature had taught him that her laws, her faithfulness, and her beauty, could be observed as well in small as in great objects. Experience in divers ranks of society had shown him how ill-based were the conventional distinctions. It is not to be thought that the system of ideas known as Revolutionary had penetrated Cambridge without arousing his sympathetic interest Yet it is likely,

too, that, with the indifference to politics which characterizes Anglo-Saxon youth, he failed to realize at this time the importance or even the dramatic values of the great world-movement of which he was soon to catch a glimpse. He cared far more for landscape. Indeed, the enjoyment of natural beauty was apparently his one absorbing passion. In planning a journey on foot from Calais to the Alps, he was willing to pass within a day's march of Amiens and Rheims without breaking his bird-like flight to see their cathedrals, and within fifty miles of Paris without being drawn into what was then, more than ever, the heart of the world's political circulation. The only object for which he turned aside was the Grande Chartreuse, where great natural beauty combined with religious interest to produce a peculiar romantic charm. A similar attraction led him once and only once again to interrupt his enjoyment of landscape for the sake of a monument of human design, the convent of Einsiedeln.

His companion was a fellow-collegian, Robert Jones, of Plas-yn-llan, in Wales, who remained his friend through life. They arrived in Calais on July 13, 1790, and set out next day on a "march of military speed," that carried them in precisely two weeks to Châlons on the Saône, a distance of over three hundred and fifty miles. They slept at Ardres on the 14th, Péronne the 17th, a village near Coucy the 18th, Soissons the 19th, Château Thierry the 20th, Sézanne the 21st, a village near Troyes the 22nd, Bar-sur-Seine the 23rd, Châtillon-sur-Seine the 24th, Nuits the 26th, and Châlons the 27th and 28th. They descended the Saône to Lyons by boat, where they slept on July 30. Next day they sailed down the Rhone to Coudrieu, and disembarked, it appears, at St. Vallier, about twenty miles above Valence. On August 1 they slept at a village called, in their itinerary, Moreau, on the 2nd at Voreppe, on the 3rd at a village near the Grande Chartreuse, and on the 4th they visited that celebrated monastery. On the 6th they were at Aix-les-Bains, and on the 9th Lausanne, having, it would seem, passed rapidly

through Geneva and proceeded along the north shore of the Lake.

From Lausanne they proceeded up the Valais, by way of Villeneuve on the 10th, and St. Maurice or Martigny on the 11th, and thence, leaving their bundles at the latter town, strode over the Col de Balme to Chamonix on the 12th. They spent the 13th at Chamonix, and returned to the Valais at Martigny on the 14th. On July 15 they were at a village beyond Sion, on the 16th at Brieg, on the 17th at the Hospice on the Simplon, on the 18th at Morgozza, on the 19th at a village beyond Lago Maggiore, on the 20th at a village on Lake Como, on the 21st at a village beyond Gravedona. On the 22nd Wordsworth reached Samolaco, and Jones the town of Chiavenna, six miles farther north, and on the 23rd they were at Soazza, in the canton Grisons, whence they crossed to the village of Hinterrhein. On the 24th they reached Spluegen, on the 25th Flims, having descended the Hinter Rhein to its junction with the Vorder Rhein, on the 26th Dissentis, whence via Tschmutt and Andermatt they crossed to the Reuss on the 26th, descending to Fluelen on the 28th, and proceeding to Lucerne on the 29th. With amazing speed and regularity they hastened on, and reached the shores of the Lake of Zurich on the 30th, when they made their second deviation, to visit the abbey and wonder-working image of Einsiedeln, on the 31st. On September 1 and 2 they were at Glarus, on the 3rd at a village beyond the Lake of Wallenstadt, on the 4th at a village on the road to Appenzell, on the 5th at Appenzell, and on the 6th at Kesswyl, on the Lake of Constance. On the 10th they arrived at Lucerne, having spent two days along the Rhine, and crossed, apparently, through Aargau. On the 11th they left Lucerne, and on the 13th reached Grindelwald, stopping at Sachseln on the Lake of Sarnen, and probably going by way of the Lake of Lungern, the Bruenig Pass, Meiringen, and the Great Scheideck. On the 14th they descended to Lauterbrunnen; on the 15th they stopped at a village three leagues from Berne; on the

16th they reached Avenches, near the Lake of Morat, having deviated considerably from the most direct route to Basel, which appears to have been their objective.

The reason for this détour is sufficiently evident if we consider that lakes, rather than cities or even mountains, were what they sought, and furthermore that some of the most entrancing pages of Rousseau had bestowed a romantic charm upon the group of waters near Neuchâtel. In this neighbourhood they lingered three days, probably visiting the island of St. Pierre, which had been made famous in the twelfth book of the "Confessions" and in the fifth Revery. Between the 19th and the 21st they went on to Basel, where they at once bought a boat, in which they floated down the Rhine to Cologne in one week. Thence they struck across-country to Calais, coming to a place three leagues from Aix-la-Chapelle on September 29, which is the last date recorded. The distance thence to Calais could hardly be covered in less than ten days.

In a letter to his sister, Wordsworth had expressed the hope of being in England by October 10. There was no necessity for him to be in Cambridge before November 10. In a letter to Miss Pollard, dated Forncett, October 6, 1790, his impatient sister writes:

"If you have been informed that I have had so dear a friend as my brother William traversing (on foot, with only one companion) the mountains of Switzerland during the whole of this summer, and that he has not yet returned, I flatter myself you will be anxious on my account to hear of his welfare. I received a very long letter from him a week ago, which was begun upon the lake of Constance ten days before its conclusion at the city of Berne."

With characteristic impetuosity, and confidence that whatever her brother did must interest her friend Jane, she copies his long itinerary and most of his observations. She then mentions being very well acquainted with the father and mother of James and Harriet Martineau.

The letter to which she refers is as follows. Its interest will be trebled if it is read in connection with "Descrip-

tive Sketches"—preferably as originally printed—and the second half of the sixth book of "The Prelude." It was written in Switzerland, at intervals between September 6 and 16, 1790, and is printed at length in Vol. I. of the "Memoirs." The following passages are the most interesting:

"My spirits have been kept in a perpetual hurry of delight, by the almost uninterrupted succession of sublime and beautiful objects which have passed before my eyes during the course of the last month. . . . At the lake of Como, my mind ran through a thousand dreams of happiness, which might be enjoyed upon its banks if heightened by conversation and the exercise of the social affections. Among the more awful scenes of the Alps, I had not a thought of man, or a single created being; my whole soul was turned to Him who produced the terrible majesty before me. . . . I hope we shall be in England by the 10th of October. I have had, during the course of this delightful tour, a great deal of uneasiness from an apprehension of your anxiety on my account. I have thought of you perpetually; and never have my eyes burst upon a scene of particular loveliness but I have almost instantly wished that you could for a moment be transported to the place where I stood to enjoy it. I have been more particularly induced to form these wishes because the scenes of Switzerland have no resemblance to any I have found in England; consequently it may probably never be in your power to form an idea of them. We are now, as I observed above, upon the point of quitting these most sublime and beautiful parts; and you cannot imagine the melancholy regret which I feel at the idea. I am a perfect enthusiast in my admiration of nature in all her various forms; and I have looked upon, and, as it were, conversed with, the objects which this country has presented to my view so long, and with such increasing pleasure, that the idea of parting from them oppresses me with a sadness similar to what I have always felt in quitting a beloved friend.

"There is no reason to be surprised at the strong attachment which the Swiss have always shown to their native country. Much of it must undoubtedly have been owing to those charms which have already produced so powerful an effect upon me, and to which the rudest minds cannot possibly be indifferent. Ten thousand

times in the course of this tour have I regretted the inability of my memory to retain a more strong impression of the beautiful forms before me; and again and again, in quitting a fortunate station, have I returned to it with the most eager avidity, in the hope of bearing away a more lively picture. At this moment, when many of these landscapes are floating before my mind, I feel a high enjoyment in reflecting that perhaps scarcely a day of my life will pass in which I shall not derive some happiness from these images. . . . My partiality to Switzerland, excited by its natural charms, induces me to hope that the manners of the inhabitants are amiable; but at the same time I cannot help frequently comparing them with those of the French, and, as far as I have had opportunity to observe, they lose very much by the comparison. We not only found the French a much less imposing people, but that politeness diffused through the lowest ranks had an air so engaging that you could scarce attribute it to any other cause than real benevolence. During the time, which was near a month, that we were in France, we had not once to complain of the smallest deficiency in courtesy in any person, much less of any positive rudeness. We had also perpetual occasion to observe that cheerfulness and sprightliness for which the French have always been remarkable. But I must remind you that we crossed at the time when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the revolution. It was a most interesting period to be in France; and we had many delightful scenes, where the interest of the picture was owing solely to this cause. I was also much pleased with what I saw of the Italians during the short time we were among them. We had several times occasion to observe a softness and elegance which contrasted strongly with the severe austereness of their neighbours on the other side of the Alps. . . . We have both enjoyed most excellent health; and we have been so inured to walking that we are both become almost insensible to fatigue. We have several times performed a journey of thirteen leagues over the most mountainous parts of Switzerland without any more weariness than if we had been walking an hour in the groves of Cambridge. Our appearance is singular; and we have often observed that, in passing through a village, we have excited a general smile. Our coats, which we had made light on purpose for the journey, are of the same piece; and our manner of carry-

ing our bundles, which is upon our heads, with each an oak stick in our hands, contributes not a little to that general curiosity which we seem to excite. . . . I flatter myself still with the hope of seeing you for a fortnight or three weeks, if it be agreeable to my uncle, as there will be no necessity for me to be in Cambridge before the 10th of November. I shall be better able to judge whether I am likely to enjoy this pleasure in about three weeks. I shall probably write to you again before I quit France; if not, most certainly immediately on my landing in England. You will remember me affectionately to my uncle and aunt; as he was acquainted with my giving up all thoughts of a fellowship, he may, perhaps, not be so displeased at this journey. I should be sorry if I have offended him by it."

Three years after their delightful journey, Wordsworth dedicated to his fellow-traveller, by that time the Rev. Robert Jones, fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, a little volume entitled "Descriptive Sketches. In Verse. Taken during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard Alps. By W. Wordsworth, B.A., of St. John's, Cambridge." "In inscribing this little book to you," he says, "I consult my heart. You know well how great is the difference between two companions lolling in a post-chaise, and two travellers plodding slowly along the road, side by side, each with his little knapsack of necessaries upon his shoulders. How much more of heart between the two latter!" It is merely indicative of the formality of eighteenth-century manners that this letter to a dear friend should conclude, "I am, Dear Sir, Your most obedient very humble Servant."

The original text of "Descriptive Sketches" was materially altered by Wordsworth in the edition of 1815, and much emended in the editions of 1820, 1827, 1832, 1836, 1845, and 1849. It was considerably longer than in the form which it finally attained. Many of the alterations were made in the interest of clearness and artistic finish, but some were attempts to moderate, discreetly if not prudishly, one or two passages of glowing description, and to take the very heart out

of pages pulsing with ardent enthusiasm for liberty. This is not the place to discuss the literary value of the poem, but we may well expect that some of its eight hundred lines, as originally printed, will bear witness to its author's character and opinions in 1790, even though it was written for the most part in 1791 and 1792.

It took all the sunshine and beauty of the first few days' march to remove the scruples with which he set forth:

> Me, lured by hope her sorrows to remove,
> A heart, that could not much itself approve,
> O'er Gallia's wastes of corn dejected led.

The first particular upon which he dwells is the intrusion of a band of Revolutionists upon the quiet shades of the Grande Chartreuse. The sight displeased him, but he drew at that time no elaborate lesson from it. His powers of description were put more to the test in an effort to render the effects of light and shadow on the mountain-slopes that embosom Lake Como, and to reproduce the spirit of the lively peasants who inhabit its villages. His first intention, as he tells us, was to call his poem, " Picturesque Sketches," and it is indeed a series of painter's compositions on subjects chosen with regard to their pathetic effect. The material thus worked up and the mass of scenes rejected for this occasion, but retained in memory, constitute the second of the great stores upon which he depended during the rest of his life. One he accumulated chiefly at Hawkshead, the other in the Alps. In the edition of 1793 there are touches that the iron self-restraint of his later years caused him to erase or blur—mention of " fair dark-eyed maids," who smiled from their arboured gardens at the swift-striding English boys. In a strain which in maturer years he never permitted himself to employ, he describes the languorous afternoons and thrilled starlit evenings of an Italian summer:

> Slow glides the sail along th' illumined shore,
> And steals into the shade the lazy oar.
> Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,
> And amorous music on the water dies.

Heedless how Pliny, musing here, survey'd
Old Roman boats and figures through the shade,
Pale Passion, overpower'd, retires and woos
The thicket, where th' unlisten'd stock-dove coos.

And again, in a passage only partly reproduced in later editions, we feel the same warmth, and at the same time observe a reference to the political subjection of Italy:

Farewell! those forms that, in the noon-tide shade,
Rest, near their little plots of wheaten glade;
Those steadfast eyes, that beating breasts inspire
To throw the "sultry ray" of young Desire;
Those lips, whose tides of fragrance come, and go,
Accordant to the cheek's unquiet glow;
Those shadowy breasts in love's soft light array'd,
And rising, by the moon of passion sway'd.
Thy fragrant gales and lute-resounding streams,
Breathe o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams;
While Slavery, forcing the sunk mind to dwell
On joys that might disgrace the captive's cell,
Her shameless timbrel shakes along thy marge,
And winds between thine isles the vocal barge.

The strokes with which he depicts the scenery of the Italian lakes are finer and firmer than those with which he essays to render the high Alps. His treatment of the former is more detached. Except for an occasional reflection, his attitude is one of pure enjoyment. With his observation of the mountains, however, he mingles many varying moods and many references to Swiss history, and in his Notes he admits his indebtedness to other writers. He has caught, however, with a high degree of success, the two main aspects of the Alps: their awfulness and their serenity. Furthermore, it should be noted as a mark of originality that he describes the life of poor and humble people without a trace of condescension. This attitude was as yet so rare in English authors as to be almost novel. He paints with that kind of sympathy which really shares the feeling of its objects. He even puts himself in the place of the superstitious pilgrims to the wonder-working image at Einsiedeln, and in a tone of dejection that is very

surprising if we forget his extreme youth and the sentimental fashion of the times, and altogether unlike him, cries:

> Without one hope her written griefs to blot,
> Save in the land where all things are forgot,
> My heart, alive to transports long unknown,
> Half wishes your delusion were its own.

The sight of half-starved peasants in the Vale of Chamonix leads to the strain with which the poem ends, the thought that poverty and disease are the children of tyranny. He burned to free Savoy from her oppressors. Happiness, he declares, is found only where freedom smiles encouragement.

> In the wide range of many a weary round,
> Still have my pilgrim feet unfailing found,
> As despot courts their blaze of gems display,
> E'en by the secret cottage far away
> The lily of domestic joy decay;
> While Freedom's farthest hamlets blessings share,
> Found still beneath her smile and only there.

This may not be good poetry, but it sounds like heartfelt conviction. Then follows an apostrophe to France, which echoes his thoughts of 1791 and 1792, rather than those of 1790:

> And thou! fair favoured region! which my soul
> Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl,
> Till Death's cold touch her cistern-wheel assail,
> And vain regret and vain desire shall fail.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Yet, hast thou found that Freedom spreads her pow'r
> Beyond the cottage hearth, the cottage door:
> All nature smiles; and owns beneath her eyes
> Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies.

Under these laboured and unsuccessful phrases may be discerned a strength of belief and a fervour of zeal which were just as real as if they had received lucid and compressed expression. France, he meant, was happy because she was free, visibly and demonstrably happier than other lands. Her mill-wheels clacked more merrily,

her rivers rippled with brighter blue and cleaner white, her farmyard cocks sent forth a louder challenge:

> The measured echo of the distant flail
> Winded in sweeter cadence down the vale;
> A more majestic tide the water roll'd,
> And glowed the sun-gilt groves in richer gold.

He hails exultantly the prospect of her war with "Conquest, Avarice, and Pride," and prays God to grant that "every sceptred child of clay," who attempts in his presumption to stem the tide of Freedom, shall

> With all his creature sink—to rise no more.

These terms were much moderated and qualified and generally pulled about in the course of that censorship which the Wordsworth of later years exercised over his early poems. Read in its original form, "Descriptive Sketches" confirms his statement to his sister that he was a perfect enthusiast in his admiration of nature in all her original shapes. He was correct in thinking that perhaps scarcely a day of his life should pass in which he should not derive some happiness from the images gathered on his journey. The lovely forms and flashing eyes of which he caught a glimpse at the Lake of Como were accountable for a "thousand dreams of happiness which might be enjoyed upon its banks, if heightened by conversation and the exercise of the social affections." The poem shows with what sympathy of heart and acquiescence of the mind he shared the emotions of the French "at the time when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the revolution." Several of the "many delightful scenes, where the interest of the picture was owing solely to this cause," he described from twelve to fifteen years later in "The Prelude," with a mastery he did not command at the time he wrote "Descriptive Sketches." The style is immeasurably heightened, and the record is no longer one of mere sensations chiefly, but of imagination brooding over incidents of life and forms of outward beauty, and making them a part of the poet's soul. The well-known opening of this famous portion

of "The Prelude" explains more eloquently, if not more clearly, his two reasons for making the journey:*

> When the third summer freed us from restraint,
> A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
> Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
> And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,
> Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight
> Did this unprecedented course imply
> Of college studies and their set rewards;
> Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
> Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
> The censures, and ill-omening of those
> To whom my worldly interests were dear.
> But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
> And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
> Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
> In any age of uneventful calm
> Among the nations, surely would my heart
> Have been possessed by similar desire;
> But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
> France standing on the top of golden hours,
> And human nature seeming born again.

In "The Prelude" the journey is hastily narrated except for five broad descriptive passages. The first of these† depicts the release of "benevolence and blessedness," the triumphal arches, the garlands, the dances of liberty, the overflowing fraternity, which they witnessed in the northern French provinces, then rejoicing in the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. The second relates‡ how the young wayfarers, sailing down the Rhone from Lyons to St. Vallier, were welcomed into the society of

> a merry crowd
> Of those emancipated, a blithe host
> Of travellers, chiefly delegates, returning
> From the great spousals, newly solemnized
> At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.

These were probably some of the representatives of Marseilles and their friends going home after the Festival of the Federation, on July 14, when the King and Lafayette, as commander of the National Guard,

* "Prelude," VI. 322. † *Ibid.*, 342-374. ‡ *Ibid.*, 384-414.

in the presence of the Queen, the Dauphin, and one hundred thousand delegates, had sworn fidelity to the Constitution before the Altar of the Country on the Champ de Mars. Englishmen, as children of a free nation, were in high favour in France. Wordsworth and his companion were received with open arms by these excited southerners:

> Guests welcome almost as the angels were
> To Abraham of old.

Together they landed, probably at Coudrieu, to take their evening meal. Every tongue was loosed. There were brave speeches of amity and glee. There was dancing hand in hand around the table. At early dawn the voyage was renewed and the enthusiasm commenced again, lasting till the young men quitted the glad throng at St. Vallier to pursue their way on foot. The third passage* repeats, with maturer reflections, his thoughts on seeing the Grande Chartreuse on a day when its sanctity was rudely profaned by a band of reformers. The fourth† is an inadequate attempt to catch the spirit of the Alps and the Swiss people. What he saw of the mountaineers confirmed his rapidly forming political opinions, and he cries:

> With such a book
> Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
> Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
> And universal lesson of mankind.

In the fifth‡ he elaborates an episode, not specially significant, of their walk above Lake Como.

In the midst of these he introduces a sublime account§ of a spiritual event, a happening within his own soul. The travellers suddenly learned, from the downward dropping of a stream, that they had crossed the Alps. When attention has been fixed for many hours upon the face of nature in a wild and difficult region, a discovery of this sort may possess a startling significance.

* "Prelude," VI. 414-488.
† *Ibid.*, 499-540.
‡ *Ibid.*, 691-726.
§ *Ibid.*, 557-640.

But what struck Wordsworth was the fact that in this moment, when nature seemed very real, his own mind seemed equally real, and distinct from nature. At first, he says, he was lost, " halted without an effort to break through " the mystery of this abrupt estrangement from nature, who had been his intimate comrade and apparently of the same stuff with him. The first moment of bewilderment over, his soul rose triumphant in self-consciousness. He recognized her glory. She was not then, after all, dependent on sense and subject to time and space; and assured of this he sang:

> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.

The road, having reached the summit of the Alpine pass, cannot go higher. The stream must flow into Italy. North must remain North, and South be ever South; but no limit is decreed to human souls. With this thought of the transcendence of mind, there flashed upon him a new conception of the meaning of visible things. The grand and terrible features of the gorge through which he descended

> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

The day was an epoch in his life, and the passage in which he recorded this experience is one of the most significant in all his works.

Lastly, in a tone quite at variance with the strain that ends " Descriptive Sketches," he attributes his interest in the new stir that animated France, not so much to Revolutionary principles as to " the independent spirit of pure youth," called forth by the widening prospects of fresh glories in the universe:*

* " Prelude," VI. 754.

A glorious time,
A happy time that was; triumphant looks
Were then the common language of all eyes;
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
Their great expectancy: the fife of war
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
Of their near neighbours; and when shortening fast
Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
For battle in the cause of Liberty.
A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
Was touched, but with no intimate concern.

It is probable, though not certain, that Wordsworth returned to England immediately on reaching Calais, about October 10. He visited his sister at Forncett in the Christmas holidays.* He was graduated Bachelor of Arts on January 21, 1791. His sister believed he might have obtained a fellowship had he tried, and doubtless if she thought so, her uncles thought so too. In a letter to Miss Pollard, from Forncett, dated Sunday morning, June 26, 1791, she says:

"William, you may have heard, lost the chance (indeed the certainty) of a fellowship, by not combating his inclinations. He gave way to his natural dislike to studies so dry as many parts of mathematics, consequently could not succeed at Cambridge. He reads Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, Latin, and English, but never opens a mathematical book. We promise ourselves much pleasure from reading Italian together at some time. He wishes that I was acquainted with the Italian poets, but how much I have to learn which plain English will teach me! William has a great attachment for poetry; so indeed has Kit, but William particularly, which is not the most likely thing to produce his advancement in the world. His pleasures are chiefly of the imagination. He is never so happy as when in a

* This is the visit referred to in Dorothy's letter of June 16, 1793. See 'Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 55, and also p. 24, where "six months" should be "six weeks." It is "weeks" in the original manuscript, and that was about the length of the Christmas holidays.

beautiful country. Do not think in what I have said that he reads not at all, for he does read a great deal; and not only poetry, and other languages he is acquainted with, but history, etc., etc."

What delightful chatter! What touching anxiety for her brother's reputation! Dorothy will not have Miss Pollard think him less than perfect, even though he has an aversion from mathematics and has not won college honours. From a statement she made in a previous letter to Miss Pollard, written at Forncett on May 23, it appears that this notable scholar had not spent even his last Christmas holidays at work in Cambridge, but had preferred her society to that of the mathematicians. Her romantic heart doubtless excused him to itself. She writes:

"I rise about six every morning, and, as I have no companion, walk with a book till half-past eight, if the weather permits; if not, I read in the house. Sometimes we walk in the mornings, but seldom more than an hour, just before dinner. After tea we all walk together till about eight, and I then walk alone, as long as I can, in the garden. I am particularly fond of a moonlight or twilight walk. It is at this time I think most of my absent friends. My brother William was with us six weeks in the depth of winter. You may recollect that at that time the weather was exceedingly mild. We used to walk every morning about two hours; and every evening we went into the country at four or half-past four, and used to pace backwards and forwards till six. Unless you have accustomed yourself to this kind of walking, you will have no idea that it can be pleasant; but I assure you it is most delightful, and if you and I happened to be together in the country (as we probably may), we shall try how you like my plan, if you are not afraid of the evening air."

CHAPTER V

LONDON—ADRIFT

In February, 1791, the poet, not yet twenty-one years old, went to London, probably with no definite plan. The following summary, at the opening of the ninth book of "The Prelude," gives but a very loose account of the time he spent there:

> Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
> I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
> Month after month. Obscurely did I live,
> Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,
> By literature, or elegance, or rank,
> Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent
> Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
> With less regret for its luxurious pomp,
> And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
> Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
> Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

As a matter of fact, he lived very much less than a year in London. The sources of our knowledge of this period are few, and some of them are misleading. The seventh and eighth books of the great autobiographical poem contain many passages reflecting, after an interval of at least fourteen years, some of the impressions made upon him by the sights of the city, but all carefully chosen to illustrate "the growth of a poet's mind," and particularly to show how the love of nature, by which he means, in this connection, country scenes and sounds, remained supreme. The incidents are not important in themselves, nor do they furnish much information as to his reasons for being in London and his main occupation there. Apart from their effect

on his poetic faculties, which can scarcely, after all, have been comparable in importance to the influence of Hawkshead and Cambridge, they were purely external and fleeting, the things every fairly observant country-bred youth would notice in the streets and public haunts of town. His effort to set them forth as contributions to his poetic development seems a little forced. His use of them is too systematic and reveals too clearly his underlying design, in a way that suggests pedantry. The want of spontaneity in these passages affects the language, which is occasionally obscure, the sentences being long and complex. He invites us again and again to observe the precise degree in which this or that quality of soul, now Fancy, now Imagination, now Love of Man, now Sense of Majesty and Power, was affected by some happening, which one hesitates to call trivial only because it caught the eye of Wordsworth. And the phrases are huddled back upon themselves, in these passages, as if for an onward rush, which does not come. On the other hand, no poet before him had ever described with the same combination of simplicity, exactness, zest, and elevation, the every-day incidents of street-life. Where they are not spoiled by too much moralizing reference to his own inward growth, these descriptions are delightful, and mark a decisive step in English poetry.

Except for two or three short visits from Cambridge, it would appear that Wordsworth had never seen London until this time. The wealth of sensations which could be tasted there might well have seemed to justify him in spending a few months in the metropolis as a finishing touch to his scholastic education. At least, he offers no other excuse, but says that after quitting every comfort of that privileged ground, the university, he was

> Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among
> The unfenced regions of society.

His want of occupation did not trouble him. With all the imprudence of boyhood and with a poet's

valuation of whatsoever might feed his mind, regardless of bodily sustenance, he deliberately took one more vacation:*

> undetermined to what course of life
> I should adhere, and seeming to possess
> A little space of intermediate time
> At full command, to London first I turned,
> In no disturbance of excessive hope,
> By personal ambition unenslaved,
> Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
> From dangerous passions free.

It was an unpremeditated, natural piece of self-indulgence, or a yielding, rather, to the impulses which always ruled him, and which many of his biographers have overlooked. His whole life was independent, but sudden outbreaks of extreme and wayward impatience of restraint frequently give sharper accent to its general tenor. At such times he was stubborn, bold, adventurous, improvident. He had no home and no parents, and his elder brother was too young to exercise any authority over him.

From childhood the thought of London had held him by a chain "of wonder and obscure delight." None of the golden cities of romance, not Rome, Cairo, Babylon, or Persepolis, could, to his imagination, be so wonderful. He tells how puzzled he was by the flat recital of a schoolmate, a crippled boy, whose uncommon fortune it had been to go to that great city, but who returned to the North unchanged in look and air. In his first year at Cambridge he went up to London on a stage-coach, and could scarcely believe it possible that mere external things had power so to elevate and depress the spirit as the roar and movements of the town alternately raised and crushed his. It is not possible to distinguish the impressions received during this short visit from those received in 1791, or, indeed, from others that he may have gained later. He mentions the obvious "broad day wonders permanent," the river, the Tower, the Monument, the whispering gallery of

* "Prelude," VII. 58.

St. Paul's, the tombs in the Abbey, and admits almost humorously that he was oftentimes,

> In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
> Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
> Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

The ever-moving spectacle of the streets interested him most, and he gives a catalogue of details, a hundred short but telling strokes with only here and there an observation that goes below the surface, as where he notes the face, " hard and strong in lineaments and red with over-toil," of the legless cripple stumping on his arms. Popular shows of every sort attracted him—panoramas, pantomimes, giants, dwarfs, clowns, conjurers, which, he is pleased to say in retrospect, gave him delight because they enabled him

> To note the laws of progress and belief.

The theatre drew him with a more potent spell. From his description, it would seem that most of the plays he heard were tearful melodramas, although he mentions Mrs. Siddons " in the fulness of her power." He felt the charm of the playhouses, whose very gilding, lamps, and mean upholstery, held him by the glamour of their association with the pageantry of romance. His aptitude for these pleasures had been retained from times at home when some rude barn was tricked out for the proud use of a theatre. He tells us, with one of those exact reminiscences of a mood of childhood which abound in his poetry as in no other, that on those occasions, as he sat enraptured in the barn, an unexpected glimpse of daylight through a chink in the old wall gladdened him by the contrast it afforded. Who has not thus, in childhood, clutched at humdrum reality to deepen the joy of illusion? Hardly more real than figures on the stage seemed to him the judges in the courts of law and the debaters in Parliament. He heard Burke, but whether the fine passage on his eloquence and his principles which records the fact is not due to long-subsequent reflection may well be doubted. It was the Burke of

'93 and '94, seen, moreover, through ten additional years of chastened reflection, whom he depicted in lines 512 to 543 of Book VII. of "The Prelude," which entirely misrepresent Wordsworth's feelings in 1791.

The great statesman had published, only a few months before Wordsworth's arrival in London, his "Reflections on the Revolution in France." The immediate occasion of this work was a sermon by the Rev. Richard Price, a Nonconformist minister, before the Revolution Society, a club originally formed to celebrate the "glorious Revolution" of 1688. This society had not only listened to a discourse from Dr. Price in praise of the French Revolution, but had forwarded to the National Assembly an address which Burke declared to have sprung from the principles of that sermon. The nobleness of the political philosophy embodied in Burke's famous pamphlet contrasts shiningly with his sarcastic attack on Dr. Price, which is mean and illiberal. And to anyone who had even a faint idea of how just, and, indeed, how necessary, was the French uprising, and how extravagant and unfeeling was the Queen over whose fate Burke became eloquent, his rhetoric must have seemed sadly out of place. But Arthur Young did not publish his "Travels in France," till 1792, and probably no other Englishman could have refuted Burke in detail. The deplorable effect of his "Reflections" in precipitating war between England and France, and thus helping to engender the Terror, might, however, have been foreseen. This book, more than anything else, turned the current of English opinion, which had not yet been decidedly unfavourable to the Revolution. It put majestic precepts and august principles into the mouths of stupid people, who used them as a covering for prejudice and ignorance and panic. As John Morley has said:

"Before the Reflections was published the predominant sentiment in England had been one of mixed astonishment and sympathy. Pitt had expressed this common mood both in the House of Commons and in private. It was impossible for England not to be amazed

at the uprising of the nations whom she had been accustomed to think of as willing slaves, and it was impossible for her, when the scene did not happen to be the American colonies or Ireland, not to profess good wishes for the cause of emancipation all over the world. Apart from the natural admiration of a free people for a neighbour struggling to be free, England saw no reason to lament a blow at a sovereign and a government who had interfered on the side of her insurgent colonies. To this easy state of mind Burke's book put an immediate end."

Those who seized most greedily upon his denunciation of the popular excesses in France, and his prophecies that the Revolution would fail, were precisely the persons least able to comprehend the great principles upon which his argument was based. As Morley again says: "It is when we come to the rank and file of reaction that we find it hard to forgive the man of genius who made himself the organ of their selfishness, their timidity, and their blindness." By the time that Wordsworth heard him in Parliament, Burke, who had once been an object of derision and fear to the Tory party, had, through vindicating the all too natural English view of French affairs, become the oracle of privilege and "patriotism." He spoke, as Wordsworth accurately records, in defence of immemorial dependencies and vested rights, for they were what was meant by "social ties endeared by Custom." The poet does not say that he was persuaded at the time that Burke was right, or that he approved the orator's keen ridicule of all systems built on abstract rights. We know that for six or eight years to come he disapproved of the national policy which Burke did so much to promote. We know that it was perhaps the deepest sorrow of his life that his country should have adopted such a policy. And "The Prelude" was written just when a reaction against his youthful ideals was most powerful within him.

He heard the popular preachers, and was not untouched by the admonitions of some, though he satirizes the affected manner, the fine dressing, and the senti-

mental oratory, of others. He glanced at the examples of folly, vice, and extravagance, which made London their domain, but lingered over sights of courage and of tenderness, rendered more touching by contrast. One of these he describes in detail:*

> A Father—for he bore that sacred name—
> Him saw I, sitting in an open square,
> Upon a corner-stone of that low wall,
> Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
> A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate
> This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched
> Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
> For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
> Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
> He took no heed; but in his brawny arms
> (The Artificer was to the elbow bare,
> And from his work this moment had been stolen)
> He held the child, and, bending over it,
> As if he were afraid both of the sun
> And of the air, which he had come to seek,
> Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

Only a few of his observations of London life are developed with such fulness. This solitary passage in "The Prelude," and three or four separate little poems, compose the entire number. They are among the first sketches of a new kind of poetic art, which has been cultivated since by many writers, and must be accounted an artistic invention almost peculiar to the nineteenth century. It was deliberately imitated from Wordsworth by Sainte-Beuve, who endeavoured through critical exposition of its principles, and through concrete examples, to win a place for it in France. Victor Hugo very splendidly, and François Coppée and others with much popular approval, realized this ideal of the critic. Johnson's "London" was composed according to a quite different method. Wordsworth felt the sensation of kinship with passing unknown persons, coupled with the unhappy realization that each of us is like a ship sailing its own course upon the waters. Interest in man, but not yet love of man, at least not love com-

* "Prelude," VII. 603.

parable to his love of nature, grew within him. The scenes of man's most intense activity took possession of his faculties quietly, persistently, " with small internal help "; and so night with its empty streets, unfrequent sounds, and calm visitations of moon and stars, was a breathing presence, and day with its multitudinous roar and turmoil was like some beloved object. But, say what he will, it is evident that the town took far less hold upon his affection, stirred shallower depths of imagination, and was in itself less sufficient, than his native hills. This is amply shown in the contrast between the description of St. Bartholomew's Fair, near the end of the seventh book, and the description of a Westmorland market in one of the vales below Helvellyn, with which the eighth book opens. The former appears scant in loving detail, and rather perfunctory, while the latter breathes at once the spirit of Wordsworth and of rural life. He gave deep and eloquent expression to his sense of the futility of city life as a source of spiritual strength,* and it was the memory of more permanent powers that sustained him " in London's vast domain."†

This inner calm and perception, which it occurs to few men to strive for, were the highest good for which Wordsworth lived. All other powers were in his estimation secondary. But such as they were, London fed some of them. He was taught by the memorials piled up in the ancient city to feel his country's greatness. The place, he says, " was thronged with impregnations." It feelingly set forth the unity of men. It smote the soul with the sublime idea that there is among men

> One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
> For the sun's light.

Of course it might be said that these inferences from the effects of London sights upon his mind were drawn long afterwards; and so they were, in the form they finally took. But there is every reason to believe that he was capable of such moral reflection, and unwilling to

* " Prelude," VII. 722-730. † *Ibid.*, 766-771.

rest content with mere sensation, at the time of his sojourn in London.

There is no trace in "The Prelude" by which we can be sure of more than one or two things in regard to his ordinary external life at this time. He was independent of the people with whom he lodged, could come and go as he pleased, and had much time to spend in free roving. The first streak of clear light in the way of positive fact comes, unfortunately, after he had left London. It is in a letter from his sister to Miss Pollard, from Forncett, May 23, 1791. She writes:

"I hope my brother William will call at Halifax on his way into Cumberland. He is now in Wales, where he intends making a pedestrian tour, along with his old friend and companion Jones, at whose house he is at present staying. . . . My aunt would tell you that she saw my brothers Richard and William in town."

The sojourn in London had lasted less than four months. How long the young man remained in Wales is not known. He visited his fellow-collegian and former companion in foreign travel, Robert Jones, at the latter's home, Plas-yn-llan, near Ruthin, in Denbighshire, and was with him, apparently, from the middle of May till about the middle of September, and certainly till August 13. Together they made another pedestrian tour, and saw "the sea-sunsets which give such splendour to the Vale of Clwyd, Snowdon, the Chair of Idris, the quiet village of Bethgelert, Menai and her Druids, the Alpine steeps of the Conway, and the still more interesting windings of the wizard stream of the Dee."*

Wordsworth's most intimate friend at this time appears to have been another fellow-student just graduated from Cambridge, William Mathews, elder son of a London bookseller and Methodist local preacher, and brother of Charles Mathews, the comic actor. The latter, in his "Memoirs," gives the following description of him:

"William, my brother, was my senior by seven years, and, being intended for the church, of course looked to

* From the Dedicatory Letter to the Rev. Robert Jones, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, prefixed to "Descriptive Sketches."

a college education. . . . My dear and excellent brother had great natural talents, and was indefatigable in his search after knowledge. He was essentially a gentleman in all his feelings; and his earliest associates were high, if not in rank, certainly in talent. The pursuits that engaged him were not those of other youths—he was devoted to profound and abstruse studies, mathematics, and had an absolute thirst for languages, six of which he could speak or read before he was twenty years of age. To gain perfection in these, his time was occupied day after day, night after night. The school exercises, of course, were only Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; French was supplied by my father's means; but at the time I was young enough to sleep in the same room with him, he rose at four or five o'clock in the morning to study Italian and Spanish; of which pursuits he was so unostentatious that he threatened me with the penalty of his displeasure if I revealed to any one the hours he stole from sleep. Thus qualified at a very early age, he entered Pembroke College, Cambridge, already an accomplished gentleman."

It was a sore point with Charles Mathews that their father tried to create "a mortifying distinction between the rank in society of his two sons—the eldest a gentleman, the youngest a tradesman." They both attended Merchant Taylors' School, where they took part in a rebellion against the masters, which led to the abolition of flogging. Their home was in London. Their father was a "serious" bookseller, a rigid Calvinist, the main pillar in one of Lady Huntingdon's chapels, and the victim of a horde of fanatical preachers, yet mild and liberal withal in disposition. Their mother was "strict in her adherence to the tenets of the Church of England." The happiness of parents and children alike was often troubled by the intrusion of this or that canting exhorter, and the boys grew up detesting what they termed "superstition." It is related of Charles Mathews that he was in the habit of impersonating Coleridge.

Wordsworth's letters to William Mathews are the only ones in which we see the poet indulge a vein of youthful levity. Beginning in this tone of irresponsible banter, they soon become more serious, though not less out-

spoken. Mathews entertained republican principles. He was apparently unsettled in life and desirous of becoming a journalist. In his correspondence with him, Wordsworth expresses himself more plainly on public questions and on the subject of his own course of life than anywhere else. As was natural beween young men of the same age who had been at the university together, there was no concealment of opinion. Their interchange of letters continued till 1796, at least, covering the most obscure period of Wordsworth's life, a period that was probably, to the few persons who knew him well, the most interesting. Time, and very likely a desire on his part and that of his family to cover his actions and sufferings in these years with oblivion, have left us only a few of his letters to Mathews, but they are very significant. The young poet's temper was impetuous. His self-will was strong. He felt the impulse of vagrant passions. His principles were of the kind that English society stamped with disapproval, as dangerous and subversive. And in 1791 he had as yet gone through or witnessed no experiences to damp his ardour and arouse misgivings. Mathews went to the West Indies to practise law, probably in 1800 or 1801, and died in the latter year, of yellow fever, in Tobago. In a letter to this friend, from Plas-yn-llan, written June 17, 1791,* Wordsworth expends many words in boyish excuses for not writing sooner. He then says:

"You will see by the date of this letter that I am in Wales, and, whether you remember the place of Jones's residence or no, will immediately conclude that I am with him. I quitted London about three weeks ago, where my time passed in a strange manner; sometimes whirled about by the vortex of its *strenua inertia*, and sometimes thrown by the eddy into a corner of the stream, where I lay in almost motionless indolence. Think not, however, that I had not many very pleasant hours; a man must be unfortunate indeed who resides four months in Town without some of his time being disposed of in such a manner as he would forget with reluctance."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 24.

He refers to Mathews's opportunity as a school-teacher to cultivate his mind, and lightly remarks: "All the conclusion that this reflection has ever been able to lead me to is how desirable an attainment would learning be, if the time exacted for it were not so great. Miserable weakness!" And finally, out of a wilderness of words, emerges the remark: "Among other things I wished to have given you some account of the very agreeable manner in which my time has been spent since I reached Wales, and of a tour which Jones and I intend making through its northern counties; on foot, as you will naturally suppose."

After the awkward gambols of William's epistolary pen, it is delightful to read one of his sister's letters, so easy are they and cordial, so open-hearted and affectionate, so full of keen remarks. She writes to Jane Pollard from Forncett, June 26, 1791:*

"I often hear from my brother William, who is now in Wales, where I think he seems so happy that it is probable he will remain there all the summer, or a great part of it. Who would not be happy enjoying the company of three young ladies in the Vale of Clewyd, and without a rival? His friend Jones is a charming young man, and has five sisters, three of whom are at home at present. Then there are mountains, rivers, woods, and rocks, whose charms without any other inducement would be sufficient to tempt William to continue amongst them as long as possible. So that most likely he will have the pleasure of seeing you when he visits Halifax, which I hope he will do in his road to the North. He thinks with great pleasure of paying that place a visit where I have so many friends. I confess you are right in supposing me partial to William. I hope when you see him you will think my regard not misplaced. Probably, when I next see Kit, I shall love him as well; the difference between our ages at the time I was with him was much more perceptible than it will be at our next meeting. His disposition is of the same cast as William's, and his inclinations have taken the same turn, but he is much more likely to make his fortune. He is not so warm as William, but has a most affectionate heart. His abilities, though not so great

* From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

perhaps as his brother's, may be of more use to him, as he has not fixed his mind upon any particular species of reading or conceived an aversion to any. He is not fond of mathematics, but has resolution sufficient to study them, because it will be impossible for him to obtain a fellowship without them."

William's second letter to Mathews from Plas-yn-llan, August 13,* of the same summer, is in the same frivolous and mock-bombastic vein as the first.

"I regret much," he says, "not having been made acquainted with your wish to have employed your vacation in a pedestrian tour, both on your own account —as it would have contributed greatly to exhilarate your spirits—and on mine, as we should have gained much from the addition of your society. Had I not disgraced myself by deferring to write to you so long, this might easily have been accomplished. Such an excursion would have served like an Aurora Borealis to gild your long Lapland night of melancholy. I know not that you are curious to have any account of our tour. If you are, I must beg you to excuse me from entering into so wide a field, contenting yourself with being informed that we visited the greater part of North Wales, without having any reason to complain of disappointed expectations. . . . You desire me to communicate to you copiously my observations on modern literature, and transmit to you a cup replete with the waters of that fountain. You might as well have solicited me to send you an account of the tribes inhabiting the central regions of the African Continent. God knows my incursions into the fields of modern literature—excepting in our own language three volumes of Tristram Shandy, and two or three papers of the Spectator, half subdued — are absolutely nothing. Were I furnished with a dictionary and a grammar, and other requisites, I might perhaps make an attempt upon Italy, an attack valiant; but probably my expedition, like a redoubted one of Caligula's of old, though of another kind, might terminate in gathering shells out of Petrarch, or seaweed from Marino. The truth of the matter is that when in Town I did *little*, and since I came here I have done nothing. A miserable account!

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 30, and "Memoirs," I. 71, where the date is August 3.

However, I have not in addition to all this to complain of bad spirits. That would be the devil indeed. I rather think that this gaiety increases with my ignorance, as a spendthrift grows more extravagant the nearer he approximates to a final dissipation of his property. I was obliged to leave all my books but one or two behind me. I regret much not having brought my Spanish grammar along with me. By peeping into it occasionally I might perhaps have contrived to keep the little Spanish or some part of it, that I was master of. I am prodigiously incensed at those rascal creditors of yours. What do they not deserve? Pains, stripes, imprisonments, etc., etc. . . . Adieu, hoping to hear from you soon, and that your letter will bring gladder tidings of yourself. I remain most affectionately yours. Chear up is the word."

Mathews was discontented with his work, and made some wild proposal to Wordsworth, to which the latter composed a very sensible reply, dated Cambridge, September 23:*

"Your letter would arrive in Wales not long after I quitted it, on a summons from Mr. Robinson, a gentleman you most likely have heard me speak of, respecting my going into orders, and taking a curacy at Harwich, where his interest chiefly lies, which curacy he considered as introductory to the living. I thought it was best to pay my respects to him in person, to inform him that I was not of age. . . . I take it for granted that you are not likely to continue long in your present employment, but when you leave it how you can put into execution the plan you speak of I cannot perceive. It is impossible you can ever have your father's consent to a scheme which to a parent at least, if not to everyone else, must appear wild even to insanity. It is an observation to whose truth I have long since consented, that small certainties are the bane of great talents.

"Convinced as I am of this, I cannot look with much satisfaction on your present situation, yet still I think you ought to be dissuaded from attempting to put in practice the plan you speak of. I do not think you could ever be happy while you were conscious that you were a cause of such sorrow to your parents, as they must undoubtedly be oppressed with; when all that

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 33.

they will know of you is that you are wandering about the world, without perhaps a house to your head. I cannot deny that were I so situated, as to be without relations, to whom I were accountable for my actions, I should perhaps prefer your idea to your present situation, or to vegetating on a paltry curacy. Yet still there is another objection which would have influence upon me, which is this: I should not be able to reconcile to my ideas of right, the thought of wandering about a country, without a certainty of being able to maintain myself [manuscript torn] being indebted for my existence to those charities of which the acceptance might rob people not half so able to support themselves as myself. It is evident there are a thousand ways in which a person of your education might get his bread, as a recompense for his labour, and while that continues to be the case, for my own part I confess I should be unwilling to accept it on any other conditions. I see many charms in the idea of travelling, much to be enjoyed and much to be learnt, so many that were we in possession of perhaps even less than a hundred a year apiece, which would amply obviate the objection I have just made, and without any relations to whom we were accountable, I would set out with you this moment with all my heart, not entertaining a doubt but that by some means or other we should be soon able to secure ourselves that independence you so ardently pant after, and, what is more, with minds furnished with such a store of ideas as would enable us to enjoy it. But this is not the case; therefore, for my own part, I resign the idea. I would wish you to do the same.

"What, then, is to be done? Hope and industry are to be your watchwords, and I warrant you their influence will secure you the victory. In order to defend yourself from the necessity of being immured for the future, in such a cell as your present, determine to spare no pains to cultivate the powers of your mind, and you may be certain of being able to support yourself in London. You know there are certain little courts in different parts of London, which are called bags. If you stumble into one of them, there is no advancing; if you wish to proceed on your walk, you must return the way you went in. These bags of Life are what every man of spirit dreads, and ought to dread. Be industrious and you never need get your head into them; let hope be your walking staff, and your fortune is made. Adieu,

God bless you. I shall be impatient to hear from you, Direct to me here. I shall stay here till the University fills. . . ."

On October 9 Dorothy Wordsworth writes to Jane Pollard from Forncett:*

" William is at Cambridge. . . . Mr. Wilberforce is at Forncett. I know not when my brother William will go into the North; probably not so soon as he intends, as he is going to begin a new course of study, which he may perhaps not be able to go on with so well in that part of the world, as I conjecture he may find it difficult to meet with books. He is going, by the advice of my uncle William, to study the Oriental languages."

No doubt his uncle wished to fix him in some settled pursuit, preferably the study of divinity, to which " the Oriental languages," presumably represented by Hebrew, would be a beginning. His friend Mathews, like himself, was either attracted or urged by circumstances to enter the ministry. Like Milton, the young poet shrank from giving up his independence, though he could not have said with Milton: " No delay, no rest, no care or thought almost of anything, holds me aside until I reach the end I am making for, and round off, as it were, some great period of my studies." Delay was what he sought. He was conscious of possessing peculiar powers, as we know from " The Prelude," although his letters to Mathews do not give that impression. They are as modest as could be. He blames himself for his hesitation, confesses he is no scholar, does not attempt to excuse himself by reason of any special ambition, but raises the objection that he is unwilling to be tied down to any pursuit. As he had no home, and could not be for ever visiting his friends, he seems to have spent about half the autumn of 1791 at Cambridge, reading Italian and Spanish, and not following a definite plan of study. The likeliest opening for a young man of literary tastes, but without fortune, was to take holy orders. To stay about the university after

* From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall. This letter was franked by the famous Mr. Wilberforce.

graduation with any other purpose was rather unusual. There was pressure from his family; on the other hand, there was the inward urging after freedom, experience, knowledge of the beauties and wonders of the world. Like many another young graduate, he thought of foreign travel as a means of combining study with the gratification of a craving for these things. From the general tone of his correspondence with Mathews, in which he frequently mentions his desire to preserve intellectual liberty, it is evident that he hesitated on moral grounds to commit himself to entering the clerical profession. He, no less than his friend, panted ardently after independence. He could not have failed, moreover, to see that the principles of established religion were seriously brought into question by some of the most acute minds in his own country and elsewhere, and that the trend of public events was making against anything like placid acceptance of even the most venerable traditions. His letters are those of an awakened and restive spirit. It is not possible to assert, from the evidence which remains, that he was at this time a believer in Christianity, nor is it possible to be certain that he was not.

CHAPTER VI

INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU

We hear from Wordsworth next at Brighton, November 23, 1791, waiting for favourable winds to take him to France. He writes thence to Mathews:*

"I have been prevented from replying to your letter by an uncertainty respecting the manner in which I should dispose of myself for the winter, and which I have expected to be determinated every day this month past. I am now on my way to Orleans, where I purpose to pass the winter, and am detained here by adverse winds. I was very happy to hear that you had given up your travelling scheme, that your father had consented to your changing your situation, and that in consequence your mind was much easier. I approve much of your resolution to stay where you are till you meet with a more eligible engagement, provided your health does not materially suffer by it. It argues a manly spirit which you will undoubtedly be careful to preserve. I am happy to find that my letter afforded you some consolation. There are few reflections more pleasing than the consciousness that one has contributed in the smallest degree to diminish the anxiety of one's friends. . . .

"I expect I assure you considerable pleasure from my sojourn on the other side of the water, and some little improvement, which God knows I stand in sufficient need of.

"I am doomed to be an idler through my whole life. I have read nothing this age, nor indeed did I ever. Yet with all this I am tolerably happy. Do you think this ought to be a matter of congratulation to me, or no? For my own part I think certainly not. My uncle, the clergyman, proposed to me a short time ago

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 37.

to begin a course of Oriental literature, thinking that that was the best field for a person to distinguish himself in, as a man of letters. To oblige him I consented to pursue the plan upon my return from the Continent. But what must I do amongst that immense wilderness, I who have no resolution, and who have not prepared myself for the enterprise by any sort of discipline amongst the Western languages? who know little of Latin, and scarce anything of Greek. A pretty confession for a young gentleman whose whole life ought to have been devoted to study. And thus the world wags. But away with this outrageous egotism. Tell me what you are doing, and what you read. What authors are your favourites, and what number of that venerable body you wish in the Red Sea? I shall be happy to hear from you immediately. My address, Mons. W. Wordsworth, Les Trois Empereurs, à Orléans. I am no Frenchman, but I believe that is the way that a letter is addressed in France. I should have deferred this epistle till I had crossed the water, when I might have had an opportunity of giving you something new; had I not imagined you would be surprised at not hearing from me, and had I not had more time on my hands at present than I am likely to have for some time. Adieu. Yours most affectionately and sincerely, W. WORDSWORTH."

Why did Wordsworth make choice of France? No doubt the agreeable impression produced by the French whom he had met on his long foot-tour had something to do with it. They had charmed him by their manners, their alertness, and their speech. He knew the language fairly well by this time. And there was no doubt a more significant reason, in his sympathy with the Revolutionary spirit, now at its height. Love of adventure, a desire to be near the scene of great events, a feeling that the air of France would be good for him at that particular time when he was hesitating and France was rushing confidently forward—all these elements were doubtless present in his mind as motives. The study of the Oriental languages was becoming a faint and distant prospect. We have seen that he was studying several of the Romance languages, evidently with a view to fitting himself for teaching them. It was doubtful

whether he would settle in England on his return. His brother John was coming and going between home and the Indies, both East and West. William's thoughts were often turned in the direction of Barbados. As he has told us, he felt a leaning towards a military career, or at least towards being a General! In fact, he had big hopes, and thought the world was all before him where to choose. His sister, whose nature was equally ardent, but who seems to have been up to this time richer in real heart experience, was making quiet observations at Forncett. She chafed against restraint, but her only outlet was to share, in sympathy, the actions of her roving brothers, John and William, and the scholastic triumphs of Christopher. She was as anxious as a mother that William and Christopher and John should have every advantage. One of her great concerns was to see them educated and started in life before the modest fortune of the family was quite exhausted. And so it was with great relief that she wrote to her friend on December 7, 1791, the letter already quoted, which concludes:

"Poor Richard is quite harassed with our vexatious business with that tyrannical Lord Lonsdale; he has all the plague of it. William is, I hope, by this time arrived in Orleans, where he means to pass the winter for the purpose of learning the French language, which will qualify him for the office of travelling companion to some young gentleman, if he can get recommended; it will at any rate be very useful to him, and as he can live at as little expense in France as in England, or nearly so, the scheme is not an ineligible one. He is at the same time engaged in the study of the Spanish language, and if he settles in England on his return (I mean if he has not the opportunity of becoming a travelling tutor) he will begin the study of the Oriental languages."

Wordsworth's life was by no means uneventful. If contact with supremely important public affairs and intimacy with great spirits make a life eventful, we may say, indeed, that no other English poet, since the years when Milton sat at the council table with Cromwell, has undergone experiences so heart-stirring as

those which came in a few years to the quiet young poet from the North Country. What would not any student of history give to have walked across France in the inspiring summer of 1790? In the calendar of great days, what lover of literature would not mark as memorable above all others one on which he had met Coleridge and won his heart for ever? How many occurrences in any man's life could have been reckoned so notable as making friends with Charles Lamb and Walter Scott? And we have now come to an epoch in Wordsworth's personal history which had all the charm of adventure and romance, together with a spice of danger, and in which he touched, as with his bare hand, the vast coils that were generating heat and light for a world that was to move faster than ever before and through clearer spaces. His poetry yields sustenance to old and young, to the ignorant and the well informed, but can be really appreciated only by those who have entered into its spirit in two ways—by natural sympathy with his mode of thought, and by knowledge of his life. One of the most decisive periods of that life was the thirteen or fourteen months of his second visit to France. From the seclusion of Hawkshead, the sheltered luxury of Cambridge, the slow pace and quiet tone of English and Welsh parsonages and country-houses, he stepped in a single day into the brilliancy, the hardness, the peril, and excitement, of Revolutionary France.

The contrast between the two countries would have been stimulating at any time; in 1791 it was almost overpowering. His sojourn in France enabled him to gather into the solidity of a system those faint impulses of love for humanity which, as we have seen, were stirring in him during his stay in London. It confirmed his doubts of the validity of the religion in which he had been brought up. It strengthened his implicit republicanism into an explicit and outspoken political creed, and shook his faith in the paramount excellence of his own country. It widened immensely the scope of his "civism," to use a word more current then than now, for the step from patriotism to a love which embraces one's own country

and another is enormous. Had those months of his life been spent at Cambridge or in London or in the Lake country, he would probably not have written "The Prelude," which without the ninth, tenth, and eleventh books would be like a play in which the hero should never face his "problem"; there would have been no "Excursion," no fragment of a "Recluse." In like manner, one may say, despite the sardonic protest of Mark Pattison, that Milton never would have written "Paradise Lost" and "Samson Agonistes" had he not laid aside his "singing robes" and prompted his age to quit their clogs

> By the known rules of ancient liberty.

The strain to which Milton subjected himself for his country's sake lasted more than twenty years; in Wordsworth's case the crisis was neither so sharp nor so prolonged, but it was more complicated and perhaps more harassing.

Unfortunately, his first biographer, to whom we are so deeply indebted for facts that would otherwise have been for ever lost, either had very little material for the years 1790 to 1795, or thought fit to suppress much that a discreet and reverent interest would now desire to be acquainted with. And the poet himself deemed that he had done enough to satisfy posterity in writing "The Prelude." He tells us little about his external relations during his French sojourn, and knowledge of them would be extremely valuable to all students, not only of his life and poetry, but of the history of human progress. Even had he been no poet, but only the clear yet passionate observer that he was, his experiences would rank with the most precious documents of the Revolution. It has often been suggested that the facts were suppressed by his family, among whom were numbered several great Churchmen and a Master of Trinity. Wordsworth himself in his old age may have been unwilling to let the world know, except in the very general terms which he employs in his autobiographical poem, how extreme were his opinions, and how irregular, perhaps, was his

conduct, as compared with the standards to which he subsequently conformed. But if mere inference is at all permissible in such a matter, no one can be justly censured for thinking that the agony and gloom of his spirit for several years after his return from France indicates that during his stay there he identified himself more completely with the Revolutionary cause and with French life than either he or his nephew the Bishop were willing to admit in plain terms.

Before endeavouring to penetrate this mystery, and even before piecing together the most significant of his own poetical statements concerning the effect of his experiences in France, we must consider an influence to which he was probably exposed before he left England, and which unquestionably continued and deepened on the other side of the Channel. This was the influence of Rousseau.

Wordsworth was never a browsing reader. In the course of his long life, so uncommonly exempt from petty cares and interruptions, he read much, to be sure, but seldom with avidity. He went to books as to a serious task. His sister's Grasmere Journal, if we had not the evidence of his own diction, would show that he studied Chaucer and the Elizabethan and Jacobean poets with extreme care. He found pleasure especially in books of travel and description. He was familiar with much classical and Italian literature. Books to him were "a substantial world," very real, as real almost as living persons, and therefore not to be lightly treated. Amid their pressure, as amid the unremitting urgency of friends, he still preserved his independence, and, on the whole, few other great poets are so little indebted to books. As we have seen, he reproached himself for his indifference during his months of leisure after leaving college.

One author, however, he almost certainly read before the close of 1791, and, curiously enough, this was a writer who himself had been indifferent to books. Rousseau it is, far more than any other man of letters, either of antiquity or of modern times, whose works

have left their trace in Wordsworth's poetry. This poor, half-educated dreamer, just because he was poor, half educated, and a dreamer, found his way to the centre of his age, the centre of its intellectual and emotional life. And here all original and simple souls met him. They were drawn thither by the same force that drew him, by a desire to return to nature. Exaggeration apart, and thinking not so much of his sympathetic working out of his views, which was generally too abstract and speciously consistent, as of their origin, purpose, and spirit, one must acknowledge their truth. They are as obviously true now as they were startlingly true when first uttered. They could not have seemed novel to Wordsworth, who was prepared for them by having lived with lowly people, of stalwart intelligence and worthy morals, at Hawkshead. Originality often consists in having remained unconscious of perverse departures from simple and natural ways of thought. A person who has been brought up to know and speak plain truth appears original in perverse and artificial society.

We can imagine Wordsworth becoming, without the aid of Rousseau, very nearly what he did become. Nevertheless, the points of agreement are too numerous to be the result of mere coincidence. Had Rousseau been less occupied with general ideas, had he been dominated by a poet's interest in particulars, it is not too fanciful to suppose that he would have chosen subjects like those which Wordsworth took from familiar life; and an examination of Rousseau's language shows a careful preference for the diction of common speech. Wordsworth's earliest poems, composed before he had read Rousseau, reveal little of this tendency. It is quite likely that he owes more in this respect to Rousseau than has been yet acknowledged. And in that case the debt should be shared by Coleridge. Whether it was he or Coleridge who took the initiative in the metrical and rhetorical reform which found its first marked expression in "Lyrical Ballads" has often been discussed. There can be no doubt that Coleridge would see more quickly than Wordsworth the theoretical consequences

and implications of what they had done, and would be the first to suggest formulating a doctrine. But it may be that certain philosophical principles, derived from Rousseau, had already found a lodgment in Wordsworth's mind. For, after all, Coleridge's native bent was towards the uncommon, the abstruse, the mystical, the splendid. He adapted himself, with cordial sympathy, to the new idea, of which he perceived the importance. But affection, love of fellowship, and zeal to confer kindness, may have carried him much farther than he would ever have dreamed of going alone in the direction indicated by "Lyrical Ballads" and the critical expositions which form so large and noble a part of "Biographia Literaria."

What, in fine, are the distinctive elements in Rousseau? In the first place, we recognize in him the prevalence of reverie as a mode of thought. Reverie is an inactive, unsystematic kind of meditation, distinguished from logical processes of discourse by the absence of consciously perceived steps. It is in so far unsatisfactory, that the results cannot be determined beforehand and the movement cannot be retraced backward, as one would "prove" a result in arithmetic. It has, however, an advantage over the ordinary kind of philosophic speculation—ordinary at least in the occidental world—in that it involves a more complete merging of the thinker in his thought, engaging his sentiment and giving him a spiritual rather than a corporeal approach to objects of sensation. In reverie a person seems to touch, taste, smell, hear, and see, by a reflex disturbance of the organs, or physical reminiscence. Reverie is thus almost sensuous. Furthermore, it is not discursive, it does not characteristically tend to movement; it is static. It discloses to the mind what the mind already contains, but discovers no new subjects of thought. It arouses, arranges, unifies, the elements of one's soul, and the dreamer may emerge from his dream with a truer knowledge of himself and a more definite purpose. External events and objects are not primary essentials of this state, though they may induce

or stimulate it. This is truly the poetic process, and Rousseau, in all his most original, vital, and characteristic passages, is a poet. We are reminded when we read them of Wordsworth's remark, "Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity."

A second element in Rousseau is his desire to simplify: to reduce the number and complexity of experiences and ideals. The mode of reverie always tends to concentrate and unite a multitude of concepts which have come into the dreamer's mind from many and diverse sources. To one who contemplates in this way, all dispersal of energy is painful and repugnant. So it was with Rousseau. The tragedy of his life, and the cause of his madness, was an abnormal shrinking from being torn asunder, as all men must be continually torn asunder, by the demands of other people. Contrast with this Voltaire's joy of combat, his enthusiastic readiness to give his time and talents to others, his radiant sociability. The danger that besets a poetic temperament, the danger of excessive introversion, of shrinking from the expense of spirit in a waste of external reality, was absent in Voltaire's case, but lurked in the very heart of Rousseau. Nevertheless, when applied to things outside himself, to the social problem, the domestic life, the politics, the religion of his age, Rousseau's desire to simplify gave him the master-touch. He laid his finger on the racked nerves and prescribed quiet, concentration, and simplicity. But this meant revolution. For the habits and laws of society had been made on a different principle.

"The impulse to shake off intricacies is the mark of revolutionary generations," says John Morley, "and it was the starting-point of all Rousseau's mental habits, and of the work in which they expressed themselves. . . . Simplification of religion by clearing away the overgrowth of errors, simplification of social relations by equality, of literature and art by constant return to nature, of manners by industrious homeliness—this is the revolutionary process and ideal, and this is the secret of Rousseau's hold over a generation that was lost amid the broken maze of fallen systems."

Rousseau's Discourses, "Whether the Restoration of the Arts and Sciences has tended to purify Manners," and "On the Sources of Inequality among Men," show by their very titles the sequence of his thought and how the idea of simplification leads to the idea of equality.

Now, inequality is a sign and a cause of unstable equilibrium. Where inequality exists there is a constant pressure to restore the balance. He, therefore, who desires that life shall be simple, and that men shall attain, as nearly as possible, a level of opportunity, loves permanence and is the true conservative. Moreover, a man who thinks by means of reverie is by this peculiarity inclined to prefer permanence to change. The ruminative process is slow. Its objects are lovingly retained and caressed. Self as an active agent seems to the dreamer to be of less consequence than self as a receptive, passive organ, inwardly transforming and assimilating what comes to it. By this persistent association of self with the objects of contemplation, the latter become infused with life from the former. They lose their difference. They become humanized. Harmony is thus established between the poet or dreamer and the world which has been so long *his* world He endows it with his own consciousness. He sympathizes with it, after first projecting himself into it. And by a dangerous turn the world, or, rather, so much of it as he has thus appropriated, may become his accomplice and his flatterer. We have here, perhaps, the clue to that practice which Ruskin termed "the pathetic fallacy," the practice of reading into nature feelings which are not properly nature's, but man's. Possibly, too, we have here an explanation of the calm egoism of some poets.

But, to continue our attempt to analyze Rousseau, it must be apparent that the permanent is the natural; the truly permanent, I mean, which in the long-run holds out against all artifice. And the natural qualities of human beings are common to nearly all. To the many, and not to the privileged or perverted few, must he go

who would understand life. This conviction, proceeding from his habit of reverie and his love of simplicity is the third characteristic of Rousseau. Being a child of the people, knowing their soundness and vigour, he felt no surprise in connection with such a principle and set it forth as self-evident in his books. But it surprised Europe. To him it was a matter of course that wisdom should be justified of *all* her children *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. There was nothing new in this conviction. It has, no doubt, been held always by nine-tenths of the human race. But it was new in a man of letters. It was not the opinion of cultured people. To culture as a process of distinction, Wordsworth, too, showed repugnance at Cambridge and in his London life. He, who was to write

> Of joy in widest commonalty spread,

scarcely needed the formulas in which Rousseau stated the instinctive faith that was in them both. The social aspect of the French Revolution, its glorious recognition of equal rights and common brotherhood, seemed to him—so gracious had been the influences of his boyhood—only natural, and he consequently sings:*

> If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
> Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
> In part lay here, that unto me the events
> Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
> A gift that was come rather late than soon.

A fourth quality of Rousseau is his intense individualism. Men in a state of nature, in close contact with the earth, with animals, and with other men not overpoweringly different from themselves, have to rely on their own resources. A brooding, introspective person in such circumstances is liable to form a very high, if not an exaggerated, estimate of his own consequence as compared with that of his fellow-mortals. He is more likely to acknowledge the dependence of man upon nature than the solidarity of men with one another. The political views of Rousseau, as stated, for example,

* "Prelude," IX. 244.

in "The Social Contract," are extremely individualistic. They are based on the assumption that society was originally anarchical, a collection of independent persons or families; and the individual, not having been a co-ordinate part of a pre-existing harmony, still retains, as it were, the right of secession; he has merely entered into a pact with other free and independent beings, and his surrender of some of his liberty may be only for a time. As has often been pointed out, this conception would hardly have been possible in a Catholic. It was ultra-Protestant. It was Calvinistic. Wherever the influence of the Genevan republic has been strongest, a spirit of independence has been most active. Ruthlessly disintegrating in its effect upon large political combinations, this influence has often been productive of manly fortitude and self-reliance in smaller bodies. The histories of the Netherlands, of Scotland, of the North of Ireland, of England in the seventeenth century, of the American Revolution, and of the American Civil War, have their beginnings in Geneva. Considering Rousseau's origins, it is easy to understand his restiveness under restraint, his horror of patronage, his association of human strength, not with union among men, but with the wild and stern aspects of nature.

Wordsworth, with his Anglican training, never went to the individualistic extreme in his love of liberty. Even when most rebellious against the spirit of his bringing-up and his environment, he still felt that social ties had something of the naturalness and permanence of the external world. He thus acted the mediating part of a true Anglican, and even, one might say, of a true Englishman, by trying to preserve historic continuity without surrendering the right of private judgment.

Rousseau reasoned more abstractly and trenchantly. But trenchant abstract reasoning, in the complex field of social relations, is peculiarly liable to error. The natural, which is permanent, is also rational, and the rude popular way of arguing from analogy and precedent

is therefore, after all, a sort of reasoning. Thus Wordsworth was not less rational than Rousseau, though in him pure reason was steadily counterbalanced by instinct. In Rousseau there was rarely an equilibrium between the two; he was alternately swayed by the one or the other; he at times surrendered himself to reverie and earned the name of sentimentalist; and, again, he was seduced by the speciousness of abstract reasoning, and has therefore, perhaps not altogether unjustly, been called a sophist. Wordsworth, as became a poet, did not thus separate his mental processes. His reverie was more like reflection, it had more of the rational, discursive quality than Rousseau's; and his reasoning was less abstract, it never lost touch with things and events. As Edward Caird, using the method and language of Hegel, put the case, Wordsworth " transcends " Rousseau, reconciling his contradictions in a higher plane.*

He who believes that tillers of the soil and those in walks of life but little removed from them—that is, the majority of mankind—are leading natural and therefore rational lives, and that their social laws are relatively permanent, and therefore not wanting in authority, is not likely to be made unhappy by the outbreak of a revolution which promises to restore the artificially disturbed balance of human power and happiness. Rousseau's message, notwithstanding the final gloom of his life, was one of gladness. More than any other feature of the Revolution, Wordsworth, too, felt its joy.

* Essay on " Wordsworth " in " Essays on Literature," 1909.

CHAPTER VII

IN REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE

WHEN the young English poet set foot on French soil, near the end of November, 1791, the prospects for a successful issue of the Revolution were very bright. The movement was still apparently under the control of sober men, the disciples of Montesquieu, whose object was to model a State after the English pattern, with constitution, hereditary sovereignty, and legal safeguards of personal freedom. The excellent elements, also, of Rousseau's doctrines were being put into practice. The net result of the work of the Constituent Assembly was such as to win the approval of all French patriots and of nearly all progressive Englishmen, Burke being one of the few notable exceptions. What generous and emancipated spirit could fail to applaud its great achievements? It had abolished feudal privileges, many of the nobles themselves voluntarily renouncing their immemorial advantages in local government. It had taken from the king and reserved for the representatives of the people the power to make laws, to impose taxes, and to declare war and peace. It had wiped out the *octroi* and many other restrictions on agriculture, industry, and internal trade. It had abolished titles and the law of primogeniture, and thus reduced the nobles to the rank of ordinary citizens. It had thrown open all civil and military careers to all citizens, regardless of birth and religion. It had replaced the ancient provinces with eighty-three departments nearly equal in size. It had begun a vast reform of the national finances. It had firmly established an equally great and necessary judicial reform, by replacing the

four hundred local systems of custom law with a uniform procedure, and setting on foot the work of codification. It had undertaken with equal energy, though perhaps too drastically, to reform the abuses of ecclesiastical power, by granting freedom of worship to Jews and Protestants and admitting them to civil office, by destroying the corporate status of the Church, with respect to its right to hold property, and by thus nationalizing its immense wealth. The clergy were in this way made public functionaries, and the State undertook to support them and the charities which previously were maintained by the Church. The Catholic religion in France was to be independent of the Pope.

Some of the new laws affecting the delicate question of religion were plainly in advance of public opinion. They were demanded by the logic of the movement, but did not take sufficient account of either sentiment or facts. And it was evident, before the close of the year, that they had created an envenomed hostility But an English Protestant, of radical proclivities and already less than lukewarm in his attachment to Christianity, would not be likely to resent their application in a country to whose past he was not attached, and whose present condition aroused in him the most enthusiastic hope.

On the other hand, there were graver signs of disaster, which even a youth might have read had he not been over-sanguine. The legislature sat in Paris, where it was subject to the threats of a populace which had tasted the wine of violence. Fanatical men governed the city, and were organizing its basest elements into an instrument of their will. The riots and bloodshed of July 17 were a bad omen of what might happen again at any crisis. The Constituent Assembly, before dissolving on September 30, had unfortunately passed a self-denying ordinance forbidding the re-election of its members, and on that date many of the steadiest and most experienced men disappeared from public life. The Legislative Assembly, which took up the dangerous task on October 1, should have laboured to conciliate

all moderate opinions and repel all extremists; on the contrary it embittered the Catholics by taking severe measures against priests who would not swear allegiance to the constitution; and by confiscating the property of emigrant nobles it exasperated those who had given asylum to these refugees.

We taste, however, the healthy savour which pervades all the relations of republican France with foreign Powers, in the firm declaration which the Assembly, on November 29, 1791, required the King to send to the foreign princes who were assembling their forces on the frontier:

"Tell them that France sees only enemies in every place where they permit preparations to be made against her; that we will religiously keep our oath to make no conquest; that we offer to be good neighbours and to give them the enviable friendship of a free and powerful country; that we will respect their laws, their customs, their constitutions, but shall require their respect for our own. Tell them finally that if the princes of Germany continue to favour preparations made against the French, the French will carry into their midst, not fire and sword, but liberty! Let them calculate what result may follow the awakening of nations."

Wordsworth, just arrived in Paris, must have felt the thrill of this eloquent challenge.

It was his plan to pass on at once to the Valley of the Loire, at Orleans, a region celebrated then as now for good cheer, friendly inhabitants, a soft climate, smiling landscapes, and fine old royal castles. The broad and shallow river flows with a lively current through a fertile plain rich in orchards and wheat-fields, or under low cliffs of soft white limestone festooned with vines. In its blue mirror shakes the image of many a battlemented tower, which stood firm before the battering-ram and cannon, at Blois, Amboise, Luynes, Langeais, Angers. It mocks the ever-during walls of great cathedrals, at Orleans and Tours, with its perpetual flash and ceaseless change. Whether in the Orleannais or in Touraine, a stranger will think himself in the heart of

France. Here are the grim ruins of mediæval castles, at Loches and Chinon, and the richly broidered residences of Francis I. and Henry II.—the châteaux of Chambord and Chenonceaux.

For an Englishman another attraction of this pleasant country would be the purity of the French spoken by its people. We have no means of knowing how long Wordsworth expected to remain in France, or whether he had plans more definite and far-reaching than those given for him by his sister. He intended at least to spend the winter at Orleans.

All that Wordsworth says in his autobiographical memoranda about his sojourn in France is as follows:

"In the autumn of 1791 I went to Paris, where I stayed some little time, and then went to Orleans, with a view of being out of the way of my own countrymen, that I might learn to speak the language fluently. At Orleans, and Blois, and Paris, on my return, I passed fifteen or sixteen months. It was a stirring time. The King was dethroned when I was at Blois, and the massacres of September took place when I was at Orleans, but for these matters see also the Poem. I came home before the execution of the King."

The poem is, of course, "The Prelude," of which the ninth, tenth, and eleventh books are occupied with his experiences in that period and their effect upon his mind. Even if we suppose that his letter to Mathews should be dated October instead of November 23—and for this change there is perhaps warrant in "The Prelude," X. 236-239:

> Twice had the trees let fall
> Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
> His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
> Beat against Albion's shore—

we should still have to reduce his "fifteen or sixteen months" to less than fourteen. The accepted belief that he returned to England in December, 1792, is owing entirely to a statement in his nephew's "Memoirs": "'William,' says his sister, in a letter bearing date 22nd December, 1792, and written from the

house of Dr. Cookson at Forncett, 'is in London; he writes to me regularly, and is a most affectionate brother.'" Miss Wordsworth was exceedingly careless in dating her letters. It is possible that this one was written in 1793, in which case there would be no reason to disbelieve that her brother may have remained in France a month longer, or until some time in January, 1793, but not so late as the 21st, when the King was executed.

The poet makes no attempt, in "The Prelude," to narrate in order the principal details of this momentous journey. He concentrates attention on its inward results. Events, places, and times, are blurred—it would almost seem purposely—for it cannot be that, after the lapse of only about fifteen years, his memory would have confused Blois and Orleans, or betrayed him as to the city where he made one of his most valued friendships. The poem tells us, in effect, that in a city by the Loire, which appears from the context to have been Orleans, he met and learned to love a man whose conversation brought about in him a second crisis of soul, which we easily perceive was comparable only to the awakening that came to him near Hawkshead in 1788, when he felt himself "a dedicated spirit." On that former occasion he realized with what intensity he loved nature; the fervent words of his French friend Beaupuy taught him to love man. Yet MM. Bussière and Legouis have abundantly proved that not Orleans, but Blois, was the scene of their meeting and their intercourse.*

Only one of the many letters Wordsworth must have written from France during this long and exciting period has ever been printed. It is addressed to William Mathews from Blois. Surely the poet's nephew could have found material for more than the four pages he devotes to these months in the "Memoirs," prepared in 1850. A not unwarrantable inference from this silence is that the young traveller's opinions, and perhaps his conduct, were such that he himself and his family desired in later years to suppress all record of them, except

* "Le Général Michel Beaupuy," by Bussière and Legouis, 1891.

what was absolutely necessary in order to understand "The Prelude." One carefully written paragraph in the Bishop's "Memoirs" of his uncle looks, indeed, like an apology for having withheld further information. He says:*

"Wordsworth's condition in France was a very critical one: he was an orphan, young, inexperienced, impetuous, enthusiastic, with no friendly voice to guide him, in a foreign country, and that country in a state of revolution; and this revolution, it must be remembered, had not only taken up arms against the monarchy and other ancient institutions, but had declared war against Christianity. The most licentious theories were propounded; all restraints were broken; libertinism was law. He was encompassed with strong temptations; and although it is not the design of the present work to chronicle the events of his life except so far as they illustrate his writings, yet I could not pass over this period of it without noticing the dangers which surround those who in an ardent emotion of enthusiasm put themselves in a position of peril, without due consideration of the circumstances which ought to regulate their practice."

Every one of the considerations which the Bishop enumerates is a reason for believing that this was the most critical period of the poet's life, and for wishing to know more precisely how he was affected, to what length his "impetuous, enthusiastic" temperament carried him, or how his austere self-control and his English bringing-up resisted these "temptations." Such knowledge would give us his moral range. Wanting it, we can only guess the reason for many a silence and many a half-hint in his works. Nothing could "illustrate his writings" more than the events of his life in France. We may be sure that at his age and in his surroundings, with every incitement to liberty and action, he was not merely an idle spectator of public happenings. One is almost forced to believe that he had a closer personal connection with the life about him than has yet been revealed. There is a mystery, perhaps a tragic mystery, here, of which we feel the breath in many a line of other

* Vol. I., p. 74.

poems than "The Prelude." His gloom, and the sorrowing sympathy of his sister, for several years after his return to England; his long correspondence with persons in France, to which she anxiously alludes in her Journal; the singular absence in general from his poetry of the most common poetic motive; its irrepressible outbursts, irrepressible but half disguised, in several of the most passionate and beautiful lyrics ever inspired by the love of woman—the mind is startled with a reverent surmise that something more intimate than grief for a lost political cause broke his heart when he was forced to quit French soil. For apparently he went home considerably later than he had previously intended, and his return seems not to have been voluntary. His interest in French affairs was then at its highest pitch, and was become a morbid excitement. He dreamed of throwing in his lot with the Girondists, of stepping forward as a leader against Robespierre. Who knows what engagements of the heart may have bound him to the country, whose interests he henceforth, through many years of discouragement, preferred before the glory of England? And who knows what interdict, stronger than the commands of his uncles, may have broken the charm and driven him from the scene of his hopes?

The tie that bound Wordsworth to France at this time was an unfortunate attachment which was destined to cast a shadow over his life for many years. Where and in what circumstances it began I cannot say. The object of his rash affection bore the name of Annette, and was known in later life as Madame Vallon. There is every reason to believe that in its general features the poem entitled "Vaudracour and Julia" gives an account of the reasons for their separation. I have found evidence that Annette belonged to a royalist family, and it may well be that the objection to the permanent bond of marriage with a foreign lad of twenty-two, a republican, a free-thinker, and poor, came as much from the side of her relatives as of his. The nobility of his character, and his subsequent conduct towards Annette, which will be narrated in due course, make it

impossible to suppose that he abandoned her voluntarily. We must remember, in thinking of his original fault, that he had been an orphan since early boyhood, that his guardians and teachers had been indifferent to his fate, that society towards the end of the eighteenth century was lax in its views of sexual morality, and, furthermore, that France was in a state of unnatural excitement.

Annette bore him a daughter, who received the name Caroline. After his return to England he kept in correspondence with the mother, and I think it more than likely, comparing Wordsworth's expenditures with his income during the next ten years, that he contributed to their support. Dorothy Wordsworth was cognizant of the facts. While the knowledge saddened and perturbed her, it never weakened her love for her brother; and this alone would be sufficient proof to me that he did what he could to make amends for his false step.

The letter from Blois, to which reference has been made, shows that in May, 1792, he purposed to return to England before the next spring, and to take orders, though he would have wished to defer this step. His intention, however, was to engage, together with Mathews, in some literary undertaking. He writes as follows:*

"BLOIS,
"*May* 17, [1792].

"DEAR MATHEWS,

"When I look back on the length of time elapsed since my receipt of your last letter, I am overwhelmed by a sense of shame which would deprive me of the courage requisite to finish this sheet, did I not build upon that indulgence which always accompanies warm and sincere friendship. Your last reached me just at the moment when I was busy in preparing to quit Orleans, or certainly the sentiments which it breathes had forced from me an immediate answer. Since my arrival day after day and week after week have stolen insensibly over my head with inconceivable rapidity. I am much distressed that you have been so egregiously

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 42. Two fragments of the letter were printed in the "Memoirs," Vol. I., pp. 74 and 75.

deceived by Mrs. D., and still more so that those infamous calumnies prevent you from taking upon you an office you are so well qualified to discharge. It gives me still more heartfelt concern to find that this slander has sunk so deep upon your spirits. Even supposing, which is not at all probable, that it should exclude you from the clerical office entirely, you certainly are furnished with talents and acquirements which, if properly made use of, will enable you to get your bread, unshackled by the necessity of professing a particular system of opinions.

"You have still the hope that we may be connected in some method of obtaining an independence. I assure you I wish it as much as yourself. Nothing but resolution is necessary. The field of Letters is very extensive, and it is astonishing if we cannot find some little corner, which with a little tillage will produce us enough for the necessities—nay, even the comforts—of life. Your residence in London gives you, if you look abroad, an excellent opportunity of starting something or other. Pray be particular in your answer upon this subject. It is at present my intention to take orders, in the approaching winter or spring. My uncle the clergyman will furnish me with a title. Had it been in my power, I certainly should have wished to defer the moment. But though I may not be resident in London, I need not therefore be prevented from engaging in any literary plan, which may have the appearance of producing a decent harvest. I assure you again and again that nothing but confidence and resolution is necessary. Fluency in writing will tread fast upon the heels of practice, and elegance and strength will not be far behind. I hope you will have the goodness to write to me soon, when you will enlarge upon this head. You say you have many schemes. Submit at least a few of them to my examination. Would it not be possible for you to form an acquaintance with some of the publishing booksellers of London, from whom you might get some hints of what sort of works would be the most likely to answer?

"Till within a few days I nourished the pleasing expectation of seeing Jones upon the banks of Loire. But he informs me that at the earnest request of the Bishop of Bangor he has till Michaelmas taken upon [him] the office of usher in a school which the Bishop has just built. You know well that the Welsh Bishops are the

sole patrons. This circumstance will connect him with D. Warren, and I hope prepare the way for a snug little Welsh living, of which our friend is certainly well deserving. Terrot some time ago addressed a letter to me at Orleans, promising me that it should soon be followed by another, in which he represented himself as stickling for preferment, not in the Church or the Army, but in the Custom-house. 'Tis all well. I wish heartily he may succeed. Let me entreat you most earnestly to guard against that melancholy, which appears to be making daily inroads upon your happiness. Educated as you have been, you ought to be above despair. You have the happiness of being born in a free country, where every road is open, and where talents and industry are more liberally rewarded than amongst any other nation of the Universe.

"You will naturally expect that, writing from a country agitated by the storms of a Revolution, my letter should not be confined merely to us and our friends. But the truth is that in London you have perhaps a better opportunity of being informed of the general concerns of France, than in a petty provincial town in the heart of the kingdom itself. The annals of the department are all with which I have a better opportunity of being acquainted than you, provided you feel sufficient interest in informing yourself. The horrors excited by the relation of the events consequent upon the commencement of hostilities is general. Not but that there are men who felt a gloomy satisfaction from a measure which seemed to put the patriot army out of a possibility of success. An ignominious flight, the massacre of their general, a dance performed with savage joy round his burning body, the murder of six prisoners, are events which would have arrested the attention of the reader of the annals of Morocco, or of the most barbarous of savages. The approaching summer will undoubtedly decide the fate of France. It is almost evident that the patriot army, however numerous, will be unable [to] withstand the superior discipline of their enemies. But suppose that the German army is at the gates of Paris, what will be the consequence? It will be impossible to make any material alteration on the Constitution, impossible to reinstate the clergy in their antient guilty splendour, impossible to give an existence to the *noblesse* similar to that it before enjoyed, impossible to add much to the authority of the King.

Yet there are in France some [millions?]—I speak without exaggeration—who expect that this will take place.

"I shall expect your letter with impatience, though, from my general remissness, I little deserve this attention on your part. I shall return to England in the autumn or the beginning of winter. I am not without the expectation of meeting you, a circumstance which, be assured, would give me the greatest pleasure, as we might then more advantageously than by letter consult upon some literary scheme, a project which I have much at heart. Adieu. I remain, my dear Mathews,

" Your most affectionate friend,

" W. WORDSWORTH."

I am deeply indebted to the poet's grandson, Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, for permission to use a hitherto unpublished letter, and part of another, which throw more light at last upon this obscure period of Wordsworth's life:

[*William to Richard Wordsworth*, 1791.]

" ORLEANS. *Decbr.* 19*th*. My address:
" à MONS^R WORDSWORTH,
" chez MONS^R GILLET DU VIVIER,
" RUE ROYALE,
" à ORLEANS.

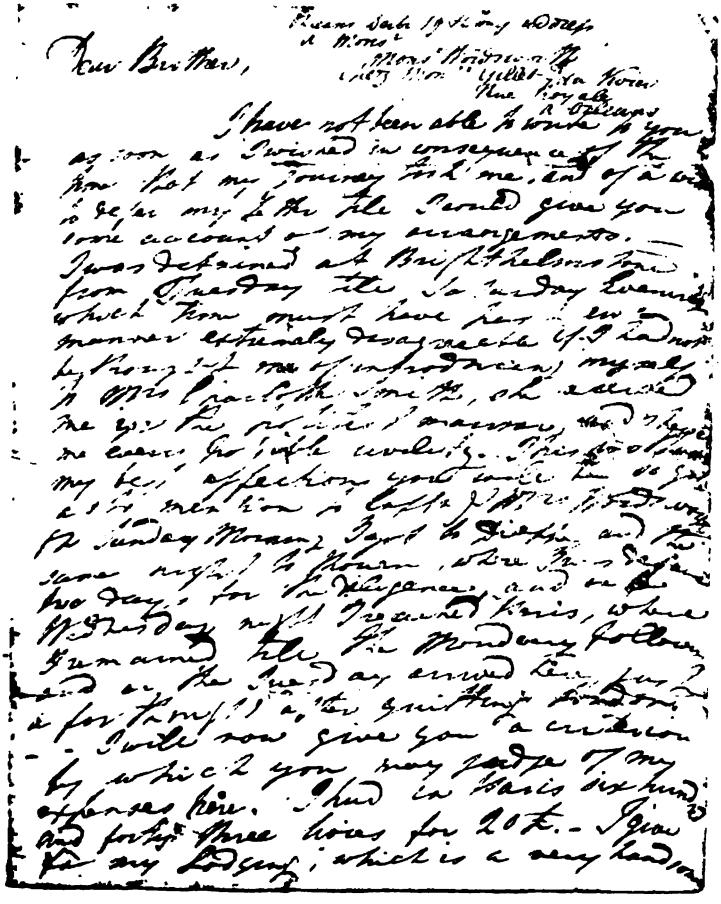
" DEAR BROTHER,

" I have not been able to write to you as soon as I wished in consequence of the time that my journey took me, and of a wish to defer my letter till I could give you some account of my arrangements. I was detained at Brighthelmstone from Tuesday till Saturday evening, which time must have passed in a manner extremely disagreeable if I had not bethought me of introducing myself to Mrs. Charlotte Smith; she received me in the politest manner, and showed me every possible civility. This with my best affection you will be so good as to mention to Captn and Mrs. Wordsworth. On Sunday morning I got to Dieppe, and the same night to Rouen, where I was detained two days for the diligence, and on the Wednesday night I reached Paris, where I remained till the Monday following, and on the Tuesday arrived here just a fortnight after quitting London.

" I will now give you a criterion by which you may judge of my expenses here. I had in Paris six hundred and forty-three livres for £20—I give for my lodging, which is a very handsome apartment on the first floor, 30 livres per month if I stay only three months, 27 if I stay six, and 24 and ten sous, viz. halfpence, if I stay 8 months—my board, which is in the same house, with two or three officers of the Cavalry and a young gentleman of Paris, costs me fifty livres per month, breakfast excluded. There are other little expenses which it would not be easy to sum up, but this, as you will perceive, is the bulk, and I think extremely reasonable considering the comfortable manner in which I live. Mrs. Smith, who was so good as to give me letters for Paris, furnished me with one for Miss Williams, an English lady, who resided here lately, but was gone before I arrived. This circumstance was a considerable disappointment to me; however, I have in some respects remedied it by introducing myself to a Mr. Foxlow, an Englishman who has set up a cotton manufactory here—I called upon him yesterday, and he received me very politely. He and Mrs. Foxlow are going into the country for a few days, but when they return I shall, I flatter myself, by their means be introduced to the best society this place affords.

" I have as yet no acquaintance but in the house, the young Parisian, and the rest of the tables, and one family which I find very agreeable, and with which I became acquainted by the circumstance of going to look at their lodgings, which I should have liked extremely to have taken, but I found them too dear for me.

I have spent many
of my evenings there . . . . . you will
have heard of the news which is
in France before this letter reaches
you; that the King has been deposed by the
National Assembly and that they
are going to make the emigrants [*MS. torn away*]
We are all perfectly quiet here and
likely to continue so; I find with
all the people of any opulence and
aristocrates and all the others
democrates—I had imagined that
there were some people of wealth and circumstance favourers of the revolution, but here there is not one to be found . . .



WORDSWORTH'S LETTER FROM ORLEANS, DECEMBER, 1794

Facsimile of page 1

"I have every prospect of likeing this place extremely well; the country tho' flat is pleasant, and abounds in agreeable walks, especially by the side of the Loire, which is a very magnificent river. I am not yet able to speak French with decent accuracy, but must of course improve very rapidly; I do not intend to take a master—I think I can do nearly as well without one, and it would be a very considerable augmentation of my expenses.

"You will give my best love to John, and repeat to Mrs. and Capt[n] Wordsworth any parts of this letter you may think will interest them, with my kind remembrances. Compts. to the Gilpins. If you see Raincock and Fisher say I am sufficiently pleased with my situation, and tell the former he shall hear from me soon.

"I have said nothing of Paris and its splendours; it is too copious a theme; besides, I shall return that way and examine it much more minutely. I was at the National Assembly, introduced by a member of whose acquaintance I shall profit on my return to Paris.

"Adieu, Adieu."

[Unsigned.]

[Post mark illegible—date possibly Dec. 27.]
Addressed to MR. WORDSWORTH,
A. PARKINS, Esq.,
GEN. POST OFF.,
LONDON,
ANGLETERRE.

Endorsed by
RICHARD WORDSWORTH.

19*th Dec*[r] 1791
Wm W. to R. W. } Letter from Orleans.*

The Miss Williams whom he mentions was undoubtedly Helen Maria Williams, the authoress. She

* Brighthelmstone was Brighton. Mrs. Charlotte Smith was a well-known poetess. Mr. Gordon Wordsworth writes to me: "We have a copy of her 'Elegiac Sonnets,' fifth edition, 1789, with 'W. Wordsworth, St. John's,' inscribed on the title-page. Her father-in-law was a director of the East India Company, in whose fleet Captain John Wordsworth, senior, commanded the *Earl of Abergavenny* (or an earlier ship bearing the same name) before his first cousin, Captain John Wordsworth, junior, who was lost with her in 1805." He has informed me, also, that there was more than one Raincock contemporary with Wordsworth at Hawkshead and Cambridge, and that Fisher and Gilpin are north-country names, and likewise Wilkinson, mentioned in the next letter. It would be extremely interesting to know who the member of the National Assembly was to whom the poet refers.

was a celebrity at this time both in Britain and in France, well known in the former country as a poet and novelist, and in the latter as a member of a group of English residents who sympathized with the Revolution. She had gone to France in 1788 to live with her sister Cecilia, who had married a French Protestant minister, and had become acquainted with many prominent members of the Girondist party, a privilege she was to expiate during the Terror, when she was imprisoned by Robespierre. She wrote several descriptive and anecdotal books on France and Switzerland, all of them inspired by an intense and enthusiastic interest in the Revolutionary cause. Though she travelled extensively and was a close observer, the authority of her works has been contemptuously denied, partly because of their bias, but even more, I think, through the partisan prejudice of her critics. She was accused of being the mistress of John Hurford Stone, or of being secretly married to him. Stone, a native of Taunton in Somersetshire, was another English Revolutionist, associated with Price and Priestley in his own country, and with Paine in France. He was chairman at the famous banquet at White's Hotel in Paris, November 18, 1792, organized by certain Englishmen to celebrate the victories won by French arms, when Sir Robert Smith and Lord Edward Fitzgerald are said to have renounced their titles, and toasts were drunk to the speedy abolition of all hereditary titles and feudal distinctions.*

One of the most curious facts in Wordsworth's life is that a sonnet was printed in *The European Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 202 (March, 1787), over the signature "Axiologus," and with the title "On Seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress." It was never reprinted in any volume of Wordsworth's works during his lifetime, but both Professor Knight ("Poems," viii. 209) and Mr. T. Hutchinson (Wordsworth's "Poetical Works," p. 619) have admitted it into the canon. In April, 1787, Wordsworth was only

* "Memoirs of Lord Edward Fitzgerald," I. 172.

sixteen. Miss Williams was eight years older, and already known as an author. As a composition, the sonnet is packed full of almost all the faults supposed to be characteristics of pre-Wordsworthian verse. "Axiologus" is a Greek compound which may be translated "Wordsworth," and was used by Coleridge as an appellation for him. Where the boy Wordsworth could have seen Miss Williams weep, in 1787, is a mystery to me.*

Miss Williams was a friend of Samuel Rogers. Mrs. Barbauld, in a letter to him, July 13, 1791, says: "Perhaps you know that Mrs. Williams and Cecilia are set out for France, and that Helen and the rest of the family are soon to follow. They pay a visit to their old friends at Rouen before they settle at Orleans."†

Through the kindness of the late Henry J. Roby, of Lancrigg, I was permitted, in 1907, to copy a manuscript containing many valuable bits of information regarding Wordsworth. It is entitled "Memories of William Wordsworth (The Poet Laureate from 1842 to 1850) made for her Children, by the late Mrs. John Davy, from 1844 to 1850 (Mrs. Fletcher, sister of

* Wordsworth, at the time of his death, possessed Helen Maria Williams's "Letters from France," two volumes, 1795; and also "Poems by H. M. Williams," in which he had written: "Sent to me by the Author from Paris—W. W." Since I could hardly believe that a schoolboy at Hawkshead could have written the sonnet, I looked through many numbers of *The European Magazine* before and after March, 1787, and found that its poetry department contained a large quantity of verse by children, and that effusions upon living authors were a favourite feature. There is, indeed, in the number for August, 1787, another sonnet to Miss Helen Maria Williams, signed "J. B——o." In the November number there is a "Sonnet Occasioned by Reading Rousseau's Confessions," which bears a rather striking resemblance, in its metrical tone and its method of statement, to passages in Wordsworth's "An Evening Walk."

Henry Crabb Robinson states in his diary that he called on Helen Maria Williams in Paris, September 4, 1814. "We conversed," he says, "a little on literary subjects. Mrs. C. [Mrs. Clarkson, wife of the Abolitionist, and a great friend of the Wordsworths] and I repeated some sonnets, etc., by Wordsworth, of whom Miss W. had never heard before." In 1820, during a visit to Paris with the Wordsworths, Robinson saw Miss Williams more than once, and has a good deal to say about her in the unpublished manuscript of his diary. The Wordsworths, too, visited her at this time.

† Clayden, "The Early Life of Samuel Rogers," p. 179.

Lady Richardson, husband Dr. Davy, brother of Sir Humphry Davy)." In this document, under date of January 16, 1843, appears the following passage:

"An agreeable little dinner-party—Mr. Wordsworth, Miss Fenwick, Mr. Crabb Robinson, and others. Mr. Wordsworth, on entering our little parlour, seemed to have about him the remains of some unpleasant mood of mind, but very soon after sitting down to dinner the cloud cleared from his venerable face, and, as it seemed, from his mind. My Mother and he went back to reminiscences of the olden time—the early days of the French Revolution. He spoke of Helen Maria Williams and Mrs. Charlotte Smith, on which my Mother took up an old favourite sonnet of hers,

'Queen of the silver bowl, by thy pale beam,'

and she and Mr. Wordsworth repeated it together in a sort of duet, their fine voices in happy concert."

When he came to France, in November, 1791, Wordsworth, as we have seen, proceeded at once to Paris. Here he visited, as he relates in the ninth book of "The Prelude,"

In haste each spot of old or recent fame,
The latter chiefly.

He sat in the open sun where only a few months before the sunless dungeons of the Bastille had been, and pocketed a stone as a relic, yet without much enthusiasm, and affecting more emotion than he felt. He was too young, too little versed in history, to care as much for these signs of the times as for the placid works of art, among which he made a rather poor choice of the Magdalen of Le Brun.* The fact of the Revolution must have been brought home to him sharply enough, however, when he visited the Hall of the Assembly, the Jacobin Club, and the Palais Royal:

In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,
I saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms.

* This picture enjoyed peculiar notoriety, because it was supposed to be a portrait of Madame de la Vallière. Joseph Jekyll, a few years before, made a great point of seeing it.

He stayed only four days in Paris before going south to Orleans. Here he spent part of the winter, and then removed to Blois, a smaller town, forty miles farther down the Loire. He was, according to his autobiographical memoranda, at Orleans again when the prisoners were massacred in September, 1792. According to his own statement in "Descriptive Sketches" (lines 760-763, original edition), he was at Orleans in October. He spent some time in Paris once more, on his return journey to England, and was in his own country certainly before the end of January, 1793, and perhaps before the end of December, 1792. He does not distinguish in "The Prelude" between Orleans and Blois, but it seems likely that the following passage (Book IX., lines 81-110) describes his life in the latter city:

> But hence to my more permanent abode
> I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
> Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
> And all the attire of ordinary life,
> Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused,
> I stood 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
> Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
> Glassed in a greenhouse, or a parlour shrub
> That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
> While every bush and tree, the country through,
> Is shaking to the roots: indifference this
> Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared
> With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
> Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
> And busy with an action far advanced.
> Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
> With care, the master-pamphlets of the day;*
> Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
> Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
> And public news; but having never seen
> A chronicle that might suffice to show
> Whence the main organs of the public power
> Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
> Accomplished, giving thus unto events
> A form and body; all things were to me
> Loose and disjointed, and the affections left

* In Wordsworth's library, as catalogued after his death, was a bundle of "French Pamphlets and Ephemera"; also Rousseau's "Émile," edition of 1762, and "Confessions," edition of 1782.

Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
Locked up in quiet.

There were at that time in Orleans and Blois several of those literary and philosophical societies which were so numerous in the large French towns in the eighteenth century. With a kindness towards strangers which is traditional in the Orléannais and in Touraine, one or more of these academies admitted the tall, rather impressive-looking youth to their reunions. Travellers were rare, and Englishmen in high favour. By a very quick transition in the poem, Wordsworth gives the impression, although he says he "gradually withdrew" from these circles, that he turned against them suddenly, and that the conversion took place at Orleans, whereas it was in reality operated at Blois, and by slow degrees:*

Night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth
Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

* "Prelude," IX. 113. Orleans, being a cathedral city, was conservative and aristocratic. We may, perhaps, leave out of account a Society of Agriculture, Letters, Sciences, and Arts, that had been founded at Orleans about ten years before. In 1784 it was finally called the Royal Society of Physics, Natural History, and Arts. Benjamin Franklin was admitted to honorary membership in 1785. It had a very limited membership, and was not at all the kind of academy to which an unknown or undistinguished stranger would be elected. See Eugène Bambinet, "Histoire de la Ville d'Orléans," 1888. But Bambinet mentions the existence in January, 1791, of "a social club for conversing about the news." He also refers (vol. v., p. 1047) to two clubs in 1790, which were evidently of an aristocratic character, such as Wordsworth describes, for "on the eleventh of May, 1790, they were menaced by outrages and insults addressed to some of their members; they were threatened by a certain ferment," and appealed for protection to the Mayor, who gave them no very quieting

The steps by which he reached this position are described in the rest of the ninth book. The time was the spring and summer of 1792.

Three features of public life in Blois would necessarily interest an intelligent observer in 1792. One was the attitude taken by the garrison, which had been partly " purged " the year before, and was now serving as a centre of Revolutionary propaganda. Another and even more dramatic feature was the conduct of Grégoire, the republican Bishop of Blois, who was one of the most eminent members of the National Convention. He was by far the most striking personality in the little city. A third feature was the political club known as the Friends of the Constitution. Two Revolutionary clubs were formed at Blois early in the preceding year, the one just mentioned and another called the Popular Society. They were presently merged under the name of the former.* The organization thus constituted was the means by which the Jacobin Club of Paris exercised an influence over local affairs. It served also as a blower to the fire of Revolutionary sentiment. It sat at first in one of the halls of the abbey of St. Laumer, and afterwards in the church of the Jacobin Order, as if imitating the parent society. I

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answer. Apart from these, I have found no traces of what Wordsworth describes, nor has the obliging head of the Orleans Public Library been able to find any.

At Blois I have made careful search for proofs of the existence in 1792 of a literary or social club frequented by people of the aristocratic party. According to a monograph by M. de la Saussaye, read at a sitting of the Société des Sciences et des Lettres at Blois, August 28, 1834, entitled " Précis des Sciences et des Lettres dans le Blésois," there were no literary societies at Blois in the Revolutionary period, except an attempt at something of the sort in 1792 called the Société d'Émulation, whose ostensible purpose was a description and history of the Department of Loir-et-Cher. It did not last long, and had a very special and to a foreigner uninteresting character. I notice, however, that according to M. A. Trouëssart (" La Commune de Blois, d'après les Registres Municipaux," Vol. II., p. 530) there was a literary society in Blois in 1795, and on p. 541 M. Trouëssart says that some time later a municipal measure was taken to abolish two literary societies. It is possible that some of the aristocrats of Blois and officers opposed to the Revolution met under such guise in 1792.

* See L. Bergevin and A. Dupré, " L'Histoire de Blois," I. 175.

have seen a manuscript roll of its members, in the Departmental Archives at Blois. They numbered nearly two hundred, and among them were persons of every walk of life, clergy and laymen, rich and poor, old men and young. Under certain restrictions the public were admitted to its meetings, which for a long time were held daily. So intense was the interest in fundamental and purely ideal questions that, even when there was no news from Paris to discuss, crowds assembled every evening to hear the debates in this club on the rights of man, the relations of Church and State, new methods of education, and the principles of government. Special and still more open sessions were held on Sunday, at which patriotic songs were sung, poems recited, and the best speeches of the week repeated. I have read the deliberations of this society, preserved in manuscript in the Library at the Château of Blois, and found in them a curious mixture of naïve enthusiasm, hopefulness, and devotion, on the one hand, and of shrewd and insolent interference with local government on the other. The fanaticism of these levellers was mitigated by a persuasion that peace and good-will were their ultimate objects.

An intelligent young foreigner would of course hear of these meetings and desire to attend them. They were the local representation of the great drama which was being enacted all over France. Wordsworth must have been specially attracted, because he already sympathized with the general movement, and also because he wished to learn French. What better exercise for his ear could he have found than these lively debates? At the best, Blois is and was a dull town. The Revolutionary club furnished an unusual opportunity for amusement as well as instruction. There were probably very few English in Blois. Joseph Jekyll, an observant youth, had found only one Englishman there in 1775.* British subjects were regarded with favour

* My thanks are due to Mr. Thomas Hutchinson for calling my attention to "The Correspondence of Mr. Joseph Jekyll." Jekyll, a lively young man of fortune, spent many weeks at Orleans and Blois in 1775.

at this moment in France. Their ancestors had freed themselves from tyranny and bequeathed to them a liberal government.

At the sitting of the Friends of the Constitution on February 3, 1792, "A member asked to have the floor, and proposed two Englishmen for membership, requesting that they should be dispensed from taking the oath, as foreigners and not naturalized. The matter being discussed, it was decided that they should not be admitted, but that nevertheless they might attend the meetings."*

It is possible, and, I think, even probable, that Wordsworth was one of these two Englishmen. If he was, the length of his stay at Blois becomes practically settled as not less than seven months.

In the meanwhile national events had happened of a nature to repel the indifferent rather than to make them converts. The first impetus of the Revolution had subsided. The membership of the Legislative Assembly was less distinguished and able than that of the Constituent. Its work for the first three months was limited almost entirely to the thorny and dolorous

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He found the latter place anything but dull. He mentions at least fifteen French families he knew there. His acquaintance extended to the possessors of many of the great châteaux in the neighbourhood—Herbault, Menârs, Saumery, Amboise. He describes in letters to his father the gay life he led. They echo with the laughter of girls and the rhythm of dancing feet. One is reminded of the opening chapter of "Le Vicomte de Bragelonne." Though only seventeen years lay between Jekyll's visit and Wordsworth's, the last three of them must have made a vast difference. The careless gaiety of the earlier time became a thing long past, and even through Jekyll's recital of pleasure and "gallantry," through the tinkle of carnival music, we hear the approaching storm and perceive why it had to come. He watched a man being broken on the wheel in the great square of Orleans for burglary; he saw "three hundred wretches chained by the neck like dogs," some of them, who had undergone the torture, scarcely able to support themselves, pass through Blois in one day, and fed there on the ground in the market-place, on their way to the galleys at Brest. Even this light-hearted boy remarked of the country-people: "Ignorance approaches so near to barbarity, that I declare, when we inquired our way, the children kept aloof, for fear, as they said, that the strangers would hurt them."

* "Registres de la Société des Amis de la Constitution," p. 115. Manuscript in the Library of the Château of Blois.

subject of punishing emigrant nobles and non-juring priests. It was decreed that all emigrant nobles who did not return by January 1, 1792, should lose their property and be condemned to death. The King vetoed this decree. Hostile armies were assembling on the northern and western borders, and negotiations, manifestly insincere, were going on between the King, in the name of the nation, and the foreign princes whose one desire was to give back to him the reality of power. There was actual danger from the royalist volunteers mobilizing, to the number of about 23,000, under the Prince of Condé at Worms. Coblentz was a centre of intrigue against the nation. There was a plot to capture Strassburg. The Assembly very naturally and correctly surmised that the King and Queen, together with the Emperor Leopold and the rulers of the South German States, were in correspondence on these subjects. After two months' retirement at Arras, his birthplace, Robespierre, "the incorruptible," returned to Paris on November 28, 1791, the very day after Wordsworth entered the city. Throughout the winter the Jacobin Club pursued a set policy of slander and suspicion, lest a reaction in favour of moderate laws and a limited monarchy should gain headway. They made the most of the King's veto, destroying the remnants of his popularity and of that of his supporters. Lafayette resigned his military command and was defeated by the Jacobins when he stood for election as Mayor of Paris. The city was become openly republican. It recognized in the Jacobin Club a mirror of its own aspirations. A fatal alliance sprang up between the municipality and the club. The faubourgs armed themselves. The King also had collected a strong body-guard. Robespierre, in February, demanded the removal of the Haute Cour from Orleans to Paris. The absent were suspected. The Jacobins opposed war for fear a successful general might make terms with the monarchy. The Girondists, being less afraid of such a possible compromise, clamoured for war. On April 20, 1792, the King was forced to give his consent to a declaration of war against

Austria. Envoys from the French government, who were sent to solicit the good-will of Prussia, England, Spain, and Sardinia, were repulsed or coldly received. The opening of the campaign against the Austrian dominions in Belgium met with a lamentable check. A French division, panic-struck even before it saw the enemy, rushed back into Lille and murdered its general, Dillon, on April 29. This is the disaster of which Wordsworth writes to Mathews on May 17.

How the course of public affairs affected Frenchmen of rank, who, though loyal to the monarchy, were still in France, and indeed in the national army, but plotting reaction, is nowhere more graphically described than in "The Prelude":*

> A band of military Officers,
> Then stationed in the city, were the chief
> Of my associates: some of these wore swords
> That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
> Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
> In age and temper differing, they had yet
> One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
> (Save only one, hereafter to be named)
> Were bent upon undoing what was done.

Such a state of mind in the army as is here depicted goes far to explain and to justify the suspicions of Robespierre and Marat, who were unwilling to give military men, at a distance from Paris, an opportunity to distinguish themselves in war. If successful, they might rehabilitate the monarchy. Defeated, they might betray their country to the foreign foe. After the King's attempt to flee in June, 1791, officers had been obliged to swear that they would obey the National Assembly. The colonel of the Bassigny regiment, which had become the 32nd Infantry, refusing to sign the oath, had been driven out of Tours, where he was then stationed, and the fact, or one like it, is alluded to in "The Prelude," IX. 181. A detachment of four companies was transferred in August of that year from Tours to Blois. It is the officers of this detachment that Wordsworth

* Book IX., line 125. The whole passage, down to line 197, should be carefully read.

refers to. They admitted him to their society because he was an Englishman, and tolerated his criticisms because, being an Englishman, he was *un original*.*

> An Englishman,
> Born in a land whose very name appeared
> To license some unruliness of mind;
> A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
> And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
> Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
> Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
> With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
> And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
> The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But he was invulnerable to their arguments. He had already become grounded in Revolutionary doctrine. The " master-pamphlets of the day " had convinced his reason. And a deeper source of strength, which made their talk seem crude and vain, was his natural indifference, bred in him from boyhood, to the social distinctions which meant so much to them. He was romantic, and would gladly have stopped his ears to politics and listened only to tales of ancient heroes or to the fall of waters and the madrigals of birds. Extremists of either side found him absent-minded when they tried to engage him. The narrow rationalism of one party and the cruel bigotry of the other, both found him smiling still at some happy thought suggested by stories or scenes of the past. Yet, when roused to controversy, he proved to be instinctively a democrat. The royalist officers sought to persuade him that their cause was just:†

> But though untaught by thinking or by books
> To reason well of polity or law,
> And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
> Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
> Of nations and their passing interests,
> (If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
> Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
> Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
> Tales of the poets, as it made the heart

* " Prelude," IX. 188-197. † *Ibid.*, 198.

Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
Old heroes, and their sufferings and their deeds;
Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
And ill could brook, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.
For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenour of my schoolday time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutes
And rules, that they held something up to view
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honour, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honour to their honour: zeal, which yet

Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
Forth like a Polar summer; every word
They uttered was a dart, by counterwinds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
I triumphed.

Politics apart, the human tragedy of the war affected him profoundly. He saw the roads filled with the bravest youth of France "and all the promptest of her spirits," under arms and hastening to the north. He saw the struggle in many a family between love and patriotism. Here and there a face in the passing files of eager young men touched him with a sense of brotherhood. The martial music, the banners, quickened his blood. These moving spectacles made his heart beat high, and seemed*

Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

* "Prelude," IX. 283.

CHAPTER VIII

BEAUPUY AND BLOIS

ONE of the oppressive laws of the old régime had been that no soldier, however brave, however accomplished, could rise above the ranks unless he were of noble blood. Among the officers stationed at Blois, there was only one who viewed the patriotic rising with the same generous feelings as the young foreigner.* This was a captain in the 32nd Regiment, Michel-Armand Bacharetie Beaupuy. He was thirty-six years old, and had been in the army ever since his sixteenth year. He was born at Mussidan, about fifty miles north-east of Bordeaux, July 14, 1755, of an ancient noble family. His mother was a descendant, in the sixth generation, from the great essayist Montaigne. His three elder brothers were officers in the old army, from which two of them at least retired when the Revolution began. They were all zealous partisans of liberty, and wielded great influence in their native region, being instrumental in choosing and instructing its delegates to the Constituent Assembly. His younger brother was a priest, but favoured the Revolution. At the outbreak of the troubles this young ecclesiastic gave up an easy post, which had never been congenial, as Canon of Arles, and became *curé* of his native parish. He joyfully swore allegiance to the constitution in 1791. Their mother had brought up these five sons on the literature and philosophy of the eighteenth century. Their home was a centre of the new culture.

* According to MM. Bussière and Legouis ("Le Général Michel Beaupuy"), there was one officer in the regiment—Vimieux—risen from the ranks, who agreed with Beaupuy.

Michel, the captain at Blois had served in many parts of France, had been promoted slowly, had read and studied much, and had lately, while on furlough, been the chief figure in the politics of Mussidan. His Revolutionary principles were grounded on a thorough examination of the social philosophy which lay behind the movement. He was a democrat in heart also. He loved the poor, and lived and laboured for their sake. The annals of the Revolution present no purer spirit, none more unselfish, gallant, genial, and hopeful. Scorned by his brother officers, he rose above them by his patient dignity. He could afford to await the verdict of time, serenely confident as he was in the justice of his cause. No other man save Coleridge had so great an influence upon Wordsworth as this sweet and devoted patriot. Of him, no doubt, the poet thought, no matter of whom besides, when he wrote "The Character of the Happy Warrior." With his more systematic philosophy, tempered in the fire of persecution, Beaupuy came to Wordsworth's support. He turned the young man's vague idealism into firm principle. And at last the love of humanity, which had not yet found equal place in the poet's heart with love of nature, was raised to the double throne. He depicts Beaupuy, in "The Prelude," with many distinct and fine touches:*

> Among that band of Officers was one,
> Already hinted at, of other mould—
> A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
> And with an oriental loathing spurned,
> As of a different caste. A meeker man
> Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
> Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
> Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
> Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
> As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
> When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
> Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
> As through a book, an old romance, or tale
> Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
> Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
> With the most noble, but unto the poor

* "Prelude," IX. 288.

Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order. Man he loved
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful.

Beaupuy was no leveller. He did not confound distinctions. He was not blind to fact. Although he evidently was a student of Jean-Jacques, he knew from experience that some men are set apart for rule and honour by their virtues and knowledge. He loved the poor and humble, but, not being an intolerant theorist, he admitted that the ignorance of the multitude who must earn their bread by manual labour debarred them from the immediate exercise of high political power.*

Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.

Still, at times, giving rein to pity and scorn, and employing the language of the day, which we find at its best in the American Declaration of Independence, and in patriotic songs, both French and American, they indulged themselves in weaker and less edifying talk.†

* "Prelude," IX. 321. † *Ibid.*, 339.

> But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
> Error without excuse upon the side
> Of them who strove against us, more delight
> We took, and let this freely be confessed,
> In painting to ourselves the miseries
> Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
> Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
> The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
> True personal dignity, abideth not;
> A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
> From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
> From lowly sympathy and chastening truth:
> Where good and evil interchange their names,
> And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
> With vice at home.

Beaupuy was Wordsworth's instructor in branches of study for which he had until then shown no aptitude. He awakened new interests, gave him social consciousness, clothed for him in garments of majestic association the history of mankind. Henceforth the poet could no longer regard the chronicles of nations as a mere quarry for romantic incidents. History, he now saw, was organic. Heroism was but the eminent outcrop of deep popular virtues and aspirations. Creeds and sects took their place with national customs, as growths unconsciously implanted and irresistibly evolved But in all this they saw the workings of a destiny, not blind and aimless, but moving towards a glorious end.*

> We summoned up the honourable deeds
> Of ancient Story,
> * * * * *
> and, finally, beheld
> A living confirmation of the whole
> Before us, in a people from the depth
> Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
> Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
> Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
> Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
> And continence of mind, and sense of right,
> Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

The world has never since offered to generous youth so wide a prospect. Never again has the future been

* "Prelude," IX. 364.

so flooded with light, never have distant mountains of promise beckoned with such strong allurement. From height to height the promise flashed. It explained the past, with all its sorrow, now so full of meaning. It made any sacrifice endurable for the sake of a sure result. The pathway ahead lay golden in the sunshine. Not since the earliest days of Christianity had groups of the purest and strongest men felt so exalted, and whole communities been so uplifted. Even solitary dreamers in distant places the thrill of enthusiasm stirred. How much more, then, were they moved who lived in daily contact with actors in the mighty drama![*]

He compares Beaupuy with Dion, the pupil of Plato, who headed an expedition under philosophic patronage against the tyrant of Syracuse. But there is no reason to think that he had in mind a close parallel between Beaupuy and the unfortunate Greek hero when, in 1814, he wrote his poem " Dion," for even at that time, in the depths of his political and moral reaction against the Revolution, he could never have intended its last and most significant lines to apply adversely to the friend of his youth:

> Him only pleasure leads, and peace attends,
> Him, only him, a shield of Jove defends,
> Whose means are fair and spotless as his ends.

Poetry, unmindful of moral purposes and public welfare, ever and anon rebelled against his new interests. As they walked side by side through the forest along the Loire, Wordsworth wearied of those " heart-bracing colloquies," and in spite of his real fervour—and that less genuine excitement worked up within himself, as he tells us—he peopled the mysterious glades of those royal demesnes with the heroines of Ariosto and Tasso, saw Angelica upon her palfrey, and Erminia the fair fugitive, rather than the goddess Liberty. He sinned in the eyes of his stern preceptor by sighing for the hushed matin-bell, the extinguished taper, and the displaced cross, when they gazed at the ruins of a con-

[*] " Prelude," IX. 390.

vent; he persisted in romancing about pleasure-loving kings and their mistresses, when they caught sight of ancient castles rising above the trees. Thus imagination, he tells us, often mitigated the force of civic prejudice, the bigotry of a youthful patriot's mind. Well would it have been for the over-wrought delegates in Paris if they could have escaped now and then from the fever and glare of the distracted city and let their imaginations rest, even as an interlude, upon quieter scenes; though it is to be doubted whether the sight of Chambord, with its tale of royal vice and extravagance, would have calmed them. But to Wordsworth, who had not to pay for ancient wrongs, those beautiful old palaces gave "many gleams of chivalrous delight." "Yet not the less," he declares, with a return to austerity, "not the less,"*

> Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
> Is law for all, and of that barren pride
> In them who, by immunities unjust,
> Between the sovereign and the people stand,
> His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
> Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
> And love; for where hope is, there love will be
> For the abject multitude.

The one unmistakable note in the pompous harmonies and crashing discords of the Revolution was hope. He alone who has hope, who believes in human perfectibility, will have the motive and the courage to love mankind in spite of all its blemishes. The essence of Toryism is despair of human nature. The essence of the Revolutionary or progressive spirit is trust in human nature. The last sentence of the lines just quoted is an epitome of that philosophy which animated France and which made the Revolution a religious movement. For whether in good or in evil, it was religious. Its good sprang from unselfish devotion to universal aims, to impersonal ideals. Its evil came rarely from self-seeking or littleness, but almost wholly from fanatical attachment to general principles. Robe-

* "Prelude," IX. 501.

spierre was as religious as Mahomet. In Beaupuy an original sweetness of disposition kept his love for the poor from turning into hate for their oppressors. He was earnest in his search for a remedy, but not vindictive. He had no fear of failure, and could therefore exercise some patience. He felt sure that most men were with him and that their united efforts must succeed. Examples of misery were not wanting, and Beaupuy used them as texts for discourses which established Wordsworth in his republican faith.*

> When we chanced
> One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
> Who crept along fitting her languid gait
> Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
> Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
> Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
> Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
> Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
> In agitation said, " 'Tis against *that*
> That we are fighting," I with him believed
> That a benignant spirit was abroad
> Which might not be withstood, that poverty
> Abject as this would in a little time
> Be found no more, that we should see the earth
> Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
> The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
> All institutes for ever blotted out
> That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
> Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
> Whether by edict of the one or few;
> And finally, as sum and crown of all,
> Should see the people having a strong hand
> In framing their own laws; whence better days
> To all mankind.

It was Beaupuy, also, who told Wordsworth the story of Vaudracour and Julia, as an instance of the bigotry of birth that France was weary of. At least, so we read

* " Prelude," IX. 509. Curiously enough, Joseph Jekyll, seventeen years before, had remarked the same evidence of poverty in the country about Blois. He says: " The peasants of this part of France are miserably poor. The girls who herd the cows are always at work with their distaffs, and the cap is always clean, and perhaps laced, while the feet are without shoes and stockings." The poor, he declares, lived upon bread and water from Monday till Sunday, and bread was very dear.

in "The Prelude." Many years afterwards, Wordsworth said to a friend who was collecting notes on his poems, Miss Isabella Fenwick, that "Vaudracour and Julia" was "faithfully narrated, though with the omission of many pathetic circumstances, from the mouth of a French lady, who had been an eye-and-ear witness of all that was done and said." And he added, using a name which does not occur in the poem: "Many long years after, I was told that Dupligne was then a monk in the Convent of La Trappe." The poem was composed not later than 1804 as an episode in "The Prelude." It was, however, on account of its length, published separately in 1820, with the remark: "The facts are true; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed."

In the same registers at Blois in which I found the motion to admit two Englishmen into the Society of the Friends of the Constitution, on February 3, 1792, I have discovered what appear to be traces of Beaupuy's activity. On January 22 of the same year, it is recorded that "one of our brothers of the 32nd Regiment, an officer, read a very eloquent discourse on political distrust, showing how dangerous it was when it exceeded the limits of that proper watchfulness necessary in all good citizens." The officer's name is almost illegible, but seems to be Beaupuy or Beaupuis. On January 29 he read his speech a second time, and was freshly applauded. An officer of the same regiment, sometimes mentioned as the 32nd, and sometimes under its old name Bassigny, is referred to several times in the next three or four months, but not by name. The club appears to have become attached particularly to Brissot and his faction in Paris.

It is almost necessary to believe that Wordsworth, a lonely young man, must have haunted the daily meetings of the Revolutionary club. They provided entertainment and excitement in a town otherwise dull—too large for rural beauty, too busy with petty retail trade to invite a genial expansion of the soul, a town sunk in a maddening monotony of small comforts. But into this

unpromising garden a seed had fallen from the wings of Freedom. A vigorous plant had sprung up, exotic, and yet so well adapted to the soil as to draw to itself the elements of life slumbering round about. There was now one important hour of day and one interesting place. A spirited young man of twenty-two, unless restrained by scruples or prejudices, would naturally avail himself of the opportunity thus offered. Curiosity would induce him to visit the club; sympathy with its objects might easily make him wish to join it. And even if for no other reason than to perfect himself in the French language, he would be attracted to these daily meetings.

Fancy would fain reconstruct the scene: the vaulted church, destitute of altar, shrine, and image, its darkness rendered visible with guttering candles, which cast " a little glooming light, much like a shade "; the platform draped in red, white, and blue; Bishop Grégoire in the choir, wearing his violet episcopal vestments to indicate that, though a Revolutionist, he was a Churchman still; one of those painstaking secretaries at his side whose handwriting we have been deciphering; " nos frères," both civil and military, sitting below, and " nos sœurs " in the gallery, waving each one a copy of the new patriotic hymn. Captain Michel Beaupuy, divested of the haughty air belonging to his birth and his old training, and clad in the new uniform of a republican regiment, ascends the rostrum and begins an impassioned speech. And at the edge of the crowd, that tall English youth, hanging on his words and kindling with the double enthusiasm of friendship and zeal for a great cause, is William Wordsworth!

Wordsworth tells us, in the autobiographical memoranda, that he was still at Blois when the King was dethroned—August 10, 1792. We cannot doubt that, at the time, he rejoiced in this event, in spite of the massacre of the Swiss Guards which accompanied it. The Duke of Brunswick had, on July 26, issued an insolent manifesto, declaring that he was coming, in the name of the kings of Europe, to restore Louis XVI. to

authority. Maddened by this declaration, and goaded by Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, who saw their opportunity to establish a republic, the people of Paris, together with large delegations from all parts of the country, invaded the Tuileries, slaughtered two thousand of the King's defenders, and drove him to take refuge in the hall of the Legislative Assembly, whence he was sent to prison. On August 25 news reached Paris that the Prussians had entered Longwy. Next came reports that Verdun had fallen, that it had been treacherously surrendered, that the enemy were within one hundred and fifty miles of Paris. At once the unscrupulous fanatics of the Jacobin Club seized control of the city government and sent a band of hired assassins to the prisons. In five days, from the 2nd to the 6th of September, more than nine hundred helpless men, women, and children, were butchered. The madness spread to Versailles, Rheims, Meaux, Lyons, and Orleans, where Wordsworth was at the time, as he tells us in the autobiographical memoranda.

Beaupuy had already, before the beginning of August, accompanied his regiment into Lower Alsace. The friends had parted, never to meet again. Wordsworth, years afterwards, heard and believed a false report of Beaupuy's death in the war of the Vendée, and wrote, in "The Prelude":*

> He perished fighting, in supreme command,
> Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,
> For liberty, against deluded men,
> His fellow-countrymen; and yet most blessed
> In this, that he the fate of later times
> Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,
> Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

It is true that Beaupuy was spared the sight of France ruled by an emperor, which is what Wordsworth saw with horror in 1804 when he wrote these lines. But he did not die fighting against the Vendean Royalists. The report probably originated in the fact that he was severely wounded at the battle of Château-Gonthier,

* Book IX., line 424.

October 27, 1793, when commanding the advance-guard of the Army of the West. He had meanwhile shared the glory and the persecutions of the Army of Mayence, victorious on the Rhine, calumniated on the Seine. His advancement had been rapid. Of mature age, though retaining the cheerfulness and vivacity of youth, unequalled for daring, noted even in the republican army as a man of strong convictions, he had survived the jealousy of the Jacobins, in spite of his noble birth and eminent achievements. Within a year after Wordsworth left France, his soldier hero was a general of division. His life was too busy and communications were too much interrupted to admit of correspondence between the friends, and Wordsworth never knew of his distinguished career as chief of staff of the Army of the West and general in the Army of the Rhine and Moselle. He was killed in battle, October 19, 1797, and buried near Neuf-Brisach, east of Colmar. The army, which knew his spirit, built his tomb. It stands at a cross-roads in the open country, a far-seen monument. In a commemorative address before the legislative body, General Duhesme, " the Nestor and the Achilles of our army," pronounced his eulogy. His biographers, MM. Bussière and Legouis, sum up his highest praise as follows:

" His convictions, accepted in his ripe manhood, after having been prepared by the liberal spirit of his family, nourished with philosophical literature, and purified by the scorn of the officers of the Bassigny regiment, were serious and firm. From the outset, they gave him strong moral authority over the people about him. They worked irresistibly upon the young but already robust mind of Wordsworth. They made a deep impression on the generals who came near him and on the soldiers who were placed under his orders. They won the esteem of enemies abroad and at home, for in that time of suspicion and calumny there is not a trace of a single word derogatory to him."

From reading his journal, it is apparent that he was impulsive and sincere, self-confident but competent.

After a scene that reminds one of some brave passage in the "Iliad," in which he snatches a sword from a Prussian officer and personally causes the retreat of two battalions of the enemy, he concludes: "This affair proves the superiority true Republicans will always have over the satellites of despots!" He never lost an opportunity to sow the good seed. At parleys with hostile outposts, during negotiations with German officers, in conversations with prisoners, he was careful to let fall a word in season, and has recorded the occasions. "I have," he writes, "never neglected these chances. I have seriously performed the oath of my apostleship whenever possible. I have always tried to tear away the thick veil of blindness from the eyes of these Germans. They are not made for freedom, I know; but, after all, some grains, I hope, will sprout."

Besides such preliminary work as Wordsworth may have done on "Vaudracour and Julia," it is not known that he wrote any poetry at Blois and Orleans, except "Descriptive Sketches." He told Miss Fenwick that much the greater part of this poem was composed during his walks on the banks of the Loire, in the years 1791, 1792, and the dates are confirmed in his own handwriting on the margin of a copy of the edition of 1832 which belongs to Professor George Herbert Palmer, of Harvard University. As we shall see, this poem reflects the principles and feelings that he describes in "The Prelude" as having been his at that time. He was careful, later, to moderate some of its language. In the first edition the author's sympathy with the Revolutionary tendency is unmistakable.

The fragment of another hitherto unpublished letter communicated to me by Mr. Gordon Wordsworth appears not to have been posted until a week after it was written, which is not surprising when we consider that this was a moment of terrible excitement along the Loire. In the interval Wordsworth probably removed from Blois to Orleans, as he tells us in his autobiographical memoranda that he was in the latter city when the massacres of September took place. The fragment, which is

the conclusion of a letter directing his brother Richard how to send him a sum of money, is as follows, and fixes a date after which he left Blois to return to Orleans:

" Blois,
" *September* 3.

" Dear Brother,

" . . . I look forward to the time of seeing you, Wilkinson, and my other friends, with pleasure. I am very happy you have got into chambers, as I shall perhaps be obliged to stay a few weeks in town about my publication; you will, I hope, with Wilkinson's permission, find me a place for a bed. Give Wilkinson my best compts. I have apologies to make for not having written to him, as also to almost all my other friends—I rely on their indulgence. I shall be in town during the course of the month of October. Adieu, Adieu; you will send me the money immediately.

" W. Wordsworth."

[Post mark: Blois *Se* 10.92
Addressed to Mr. Wordsworth.
A. Parkins, Esq.,
G. P. Off.,
London, Angleterre.

Endorsed by Rich. Wordsworth | 10 *Septr.* 1792. W. Wordsworth to Rd. Wordsworth. | Letter from Blois about money.]

It will be observed that Wordsworth did not carry out his intention of returning to London in October. It seems likely that he spent part at least of that month at Orleans. In a passage of " Descriptive Sketches," beginning at line 740 in the original edition, with the apostrophe to the country of the Loire,

> And thou ! fair favoured region ! which my soul
> Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl,

he describes the " October clouds." In footnotes to this passage he mentions the peculiar cry of an insect, the *sourd*, which I remember myself to have heard in that region and nowhere else, and also goes into a long description of La Source, a limestone spring whence flow the waters of the Loiret, about five miles south-east

of Orleans. It is characteristic of him to have sought out this natural object and described it at length when the rest of the world was infinitely more concerned with the human passions that were distracting Orleans and its neighbourhood. Nothing has ever given me so deep a sense of Wordsworth's individuality as to have stood beside the welling waters of La Source. The park around it and the château near-by are full of memories of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, but of these traditions he says not a word.

Certainly the exquisite description with which the tenth book of "The Prelude" opens, of the "beautiful and silent day" on which he bade farewell to the gliding Loire, recalls October with its "many-coloured woods."

He must have rejoiced when the good news came of the defeat of the Prussians at Valmy, on September 20. Goethe was with the invaders. France had attracted those two great poets from neighbouring lands, but how differently! Goethe, middle-aged, rich in achievements and honours, a pensioner of an old-fashioned court, came to observe, to criticize, to judge, the insane struggles of the French; Wordsworth, little more than a boy, free of foot, open-minded, thoughtless of his own advancement, and glowing with generous hopes for mankind—the English poet has every advantage romance can confer. Goethe, with marvellous directness and vigour, relates in his "Campaign in France" how he travelled through scenes of rapine and slaughter in his "light carriage" or in the Duke of Weimar's six-horse kitchen-waggon. He lets us perceive, perhaps without intending to do so, the insolence and vanity with which the expedition was undertaken, the cruelty which accompanied it, and the demoralization of the invaders when they met firm resistance instead of anarchy and weakness. After the fall of Verdun he tells us he ordered maps to be prepared showing the road to Paris. He saw unmoved the act of heroic despair when the French grenadier leaped into the Meuse, remarking that it "excited passionate hatred among the Allies," who

" had promised themselves a different state of feeling." His cold comment on seeing villages in flames was, " Smoke has not a bad effect in a war picture." He showed himself, by his own account, a thorough courtier, enjoying costly privileges and comforts at the expense of poor men and boys and tortured horses, but ever solicitous of the welfare of his prince. The contrast with Wordsworth's patient care to learn what was right and anxious zeal to alleviate suffering is very marked. And in their comments on public affairs the difference is like that which exists between two widely separated epochs, Wordsworth is so much more modern.

The day after the battle of Valmy the Revolution entered upon its third legislative stage, with the opening of the Convention. At once the Republic was declared. Even in 1804 the poet still felt the stir of exultation when he narrated the repulse of the invading host:*

> Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
> The tender mercies of the dismal wind.

Rash men, the princes of the north had seen their quarry turn into avengers from whose wrath they fled in terror.†

> Disappointment and dismay
> Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
> With evil expectations; confidence
> And perfect triumph for the better cause.

Cheered, he tells us, with hope that the crimes of early September were but ephemeral monsters, and elate with confidence in the Republic, Wordsworth returned to the " fierce Metropolis." With ardour hitherto unfelt, he ranged over the city, visiting the scenes of recent note, passing the prison where lay the dethroned monarch, walking through the half-ruined palace of the Tuileries, dazed by what he saw, and unable to conceive its meaning. But that night the sense of danger leaped upon him from out the dark: he remembered what Paris could do. St. Bartholomew, the September massacres,

* " Prelude," X. 13. † *Ibid.*, 27.

and what next? He saw the Terror striding out of future time. "That night," he writes,*

> I felt most deeply in what world I was,
> What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
> High was my room and lonely, near the roof
> Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
> That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
> Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
> With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
> Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
> Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
> I thought of those September massacres,
> Divided from me by one little month,
> Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
> From tragic fictions or true history,
> Remembrances and dim admonishments.
> The horse is taught his manage, and no star
> Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
> For the spent hurricane the air provides
> As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
> But to return out of its hiding-place
> In the great deep; all things have second birth;
> The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
> And in this way I wrought upon myself,
> Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
> To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
> Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
> But vainly comments of a calmer mind
> Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
> The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
> Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
> Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

Next day these direful presentiments no doubt vanished or faded in the brightness of dawn. He went forth eagerly through the still unawakened streets to the centre of excitement, the long arcades of the Palais Royal. Here the daily throng was already shouting, and above the general noise he heard the shrill cries of hawkers, "Denunciation of the crimes of Maximilian Robespierre." And into his hand they thrust printed copies of the speech in which Louvet, the Girondist, had essayed to overthrow the Jacobin leader on October 29. From the futility of this charge Wordsworth foresaw

* "Prelude," X. 63.

that liberty and life and death would soon lie in the hands of those who ruled the capital; he clearly saw the issue and who were the real combatants:*

> The indecision on their part whose aim
> Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
> Who in attack or in defence were strong
> Through their impiety.

Yet did he not for a moment lose trust that all would end well. He had no fear for the ultimate safety of France; what distressed him was delay and her loss of opportunity to do a work of honour, a work that should attract and enamour the nations of the world. And, in a startling passage, he avows that he dreamed—or did he really form a plan?—of offering his life to the cause. Leader or sacrifice, it mattered not which, he would give himself to France. From the solidity of his character we are bound to infer that he would never have mentioned these thoughts had they not been more than passing fancies. They must have taken firm consistency in his mind, and perhaps have grown into active purposes. Modesty struggles with a desire to tell the truth in these deeply-considered lines. He avows that he was urged by a heroic impulse, but gives the credit to Reason working irresistibly through him. He tells us that he thought of means of opposing the Jacobin power, and of remedies; and among them this:†

> An insignificant stranger and obscure,
> And one, moreover, little graced with power
> Of eloquence even in my native speech,
> And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
> Yet would I at this time with willing heart
> Have undertaken for a cause so great
> Service however dangerous. I revolved,
> How much the destiny of Man had still
> Hung upon single persons; that there was,
> Transcendent to all local patrimony,
> One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
> That objects, even as they are great, thereby
> Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
> That Man is only weak through his mistrust

* "Prelude," X. 130. † *Ibid.*, 148.

> And want of hope where evidence divine
> Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
> Nor did the inexperience of my youth
> Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong
> In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
> A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
> Is for Society's unreasoning herd
> A domineering instinct.

These are the lessons of Beaupuy; applied by a young foreigner to himself, they are the reflections of a hero. Had Wordsworth followed his impulse, it is not impossible that an instinct of command, of which he professed himself conscious, might have led him to some act of melancholy renown. He had great self-control, tenacity, courage, enthusiasm, and depth of conviction. These qualities would have been recognized and honoured, perhaps with a martyr's death. Whatever we may imagine as to the possible consequences, there can be no doubt about the perfect sincerity of the disclosure. It probably understates rather than exaggerates the pitch of his ambition.

Then, dragged, he tells us, by what seemed "a chain of harsh necessity," he returned to England, else doubtless he*

> should have then made common cause
> With some who perished; haply perished too,
> A poor mistaken and bewildered offering.

He "withdrew unwillingly from France." His nephew says: "Reluctantly he tore himself from Paris."† What caused him to tear himself away? It has often been said that his relatives cut off his supply of money. But one does not speak of such an act as a chain of circumstances. And he was of age. We know that it was his original intention, expressed in his letters, to go home in the autumn, but apparently he had changed his mind. His nephew, in the "Memoirs," says: "If he had remained longer in the French capital, he would, in all probability, have fallen a victim among the Brissotins, with whom he was intimately connected."

* "Prelude," X. 229. † "Memoirs," I. 76.

This last phrase can hardly have been written at random. With whom, among the section of the Girondists who followed Brissot's leadership, was the poet intimately connected? Beaupuy could hardly be so designated. Affairs in France were more interesting than ever, shortly before the close of the year 1792, and there was as yet no danger for Englishmen there. The Republican army was everywhere victorious. After Valmy the Prussians retreated from French soil. General Custine entered Mayence on October 20, and one of his divisions got as far north as Cassel. The French soldiers fraternized with the people they conquered; their officers used tact and courtesy; the Republican successes appeared to confirm the maxim that "when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner." In the meanwhile the inhabitants of Savoy and Nice welcomed the armies sent to wrest them from their connection with Piedmont. Dumouriez defeated the Austrians at Jemappes on November 6, and entered Brussels on the sixteenth. An attempt was made to reorganize Belgium on a republican basis, and similar plans were entertained regarding Holland and the South German States, where large numbers of the townspeople were ready to support a republican régime. On November 18 the Convention passed a motion declaring that the French Republic desired the liberty of all other nations and would assist them to gain it. This decree, and still more the declaration that the River Scheldt, which was previously kept closed by treaty in the interest of London, was free to the commerce of the world, and an order to Dumouriez to invade Holland, were of course provocations to the British government, but war was still not declared. December was filled with preliminaries for the King's trial and with the trial itself. He was beheaded on January 21.

Before that date Wordsworth had left Paris. According to an independent tradition, which can hardly be correct, Wordsworth had even associated with some of the Jacobins. Alaric Watts, writing of "an old Repub-

lican named Bailey, who had been confined in the Temple at Paris with Pichegru," says " he had met Wordsworth in Paris, and having warned him that his connection with the Mountain rendered his situation there at that time perilous, the poet, he said, decamped with great precipitation."

By an interesting coincidence, his departure from France coincided almost exactly with that of John Moore, M.D., whose " Journal," from August 4 to the middle of December, 1792, gives us in living detail the impressions made by the events of the year upon a liberal British observer. When Dr. Moore mentions walks he took in and around Paris with an unnamed young Englishman at a time when Wordsworth was in the city, we are tempted to imagine that the poet was this chance companion. Dr. Moore relates many acts of devotion to the Republican cause which must have been known to Wordsworth and must have moved him. He records the fact that after the great day of August 10, 1792, " the jewels of the Queen, many massy pieces of plate, very valuable pieces of furniture, which could have been easily concealed, all the silver utensils of the Chapel, were brought to the Assembly by those who made the first eruption into the Palace. Some poor fellows, who had not whole clothes on their backs, brought little sacks of gold and silver coin, and deposited them, unopened, in the hall of the Assembly. One soldier brought his hat full of louis, and emptied it on the table." He makes this comment, which is enough to explain Wordsworth's unselfish project: " It is in the times of great political struggles and revolutions that the minds of men are most apt to be exalted above the selfish considerations of ordinary life." And on September 6, 1792, he writes:

" Amidst the disorders and sad events which have taken place in this country of late, it is impossible not to admire the generous spirit which glows all over the nation in support of its independency. Before I left Paris, I heard of a lady who had offered to the National Assembly to take twelve poor children, whose parents

died in defence of their country, and to be at the whole expense of educating and supporting them to the age of sixteen! I have heard of many similar instances! No country ever displayed a nobler or more patriotic enthusiasm than pervades France at this period."

Naturally enough, Dorothy Wordsworth suffered some anxiety on her brother's account, as he was absent much longer than she had expected. As early as May 6, 1792, she expressed in a letter to Jane Pollard, only a small fragment of which has been published, her hope of seeing William in London, on her way from Forncett to Windsor in July:*

"William is still in France, and I begin to wish he was in England. He assures me, however, that he is perfectly safe, but as we hear daily accounts of insurrections and broils, I cannot be quite easy, though I think he is wise enough to get out of the way of danger.'

To console herself, she copies out for her friend a sonnet of her brother's, chosen, as the context shows, from a number of his poems in her possession:

> Sweet was the walk along the narrow lane
> At noon. The bank and hedgerows all the way
> Shagged with wild pale green tufts of fragrant hay,
> Caught by the hawthorns from the loaded wain,
> Which Age, with many a slow stoop, strove to gain;
> And Childhood, seeming still most busy, took
> His little rake; with cunning sidelong look
> Sauntering to pluck the strawberries wild, unseen.
> *Now* too on melancholy's idle dreams
> Musing, the lone spot with my soul agrees,
> Quiet and dark; for (through) the thick wove trees
> Scarce peeps the curious star, till solemn gleams
> The clouded moon, and calls me forth to stray
> Through tall green silent woods and ruins gray.

In a letter from Windsor, postmarked October 19, 1792, she says:† "My brother William is still in France."

* From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

† To Jane Pollard; letter in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

CHAPTER IX

A REVOLUTIONIST IN ENGLAND

THE poet dismissed the next three years in one sentence of the autobiographical memoranda:

"I came home before the execution of the King, and passed the subsequent time among my friends in London and elsewhere, till I settled with my only sister at Racedown in Dorsetshire, in the year 1796."

Yet no period of his life was more full of consequence for him. This was his time of storm and stress. It was largely because of what he underwent between 1792 and 1796 that he became one of the voices of his age. Much of the interest and value of his poetry depends upon our knowing its less immediate meaning, its political and philosophical import. If his own account of these critical formative years is provokingly meagre, all other accounts are scanty enough. Our chief dependence is upon a series of letters to his friend Mathews. "The Prelude" itself, hitherto full of significant detail, passes rapidly and vaguely over the time that followed his return from France. Of course, "The Excursion" is an elaborate commentary on his inner life during those years, but our appreciation of "The Excursion" is enhanced by every item of knowledge concerning his goings and comings, his plans and efforts. "The Excursion" is scarcely less autobiographical than "The Prelude." It is the most profound and sensitive comment literature has made upon the most tremendous social upheaval of modern times. And its depth, its truth, its feeling, are due to the fact that it reflects the sympathy and repulsion of a passionate soul who had lived what he wrote. Yet one reason why this great

poem has failed, as it undoubtedly has failed, to make an impression on many readers who thoroughly enjoy "The Prelude," is that the poet has been too reticent.

Wordsworth's position on returning to England, and for nearly three years afterwards, was extremely uncomfortable. He had no home, and was obliged to live with friends and relatives. He had no profession, and was less inclined than ever to become a clergyman, thus disappointing his family. His principles were abhorrent to them. He was a republican. He was not orthodox. He led an unsettled life. His uncles were irritated by his conduct. There is nothing to prove that he had much to do with his brother Richard, who was established as a solicitor in London. Christopher was at Cambridge, and John at sea. But his sister's faith in him never faltered. Her enthusiasm for his character, her romantic interest in his doings, never grew less. He did not visit her on his return. In her letter of August 30, 1793, to Jane Pollard, she says:* "It is nearly three years since my brother and I parted. It will be exactly three years when we meet again." The passage in her letter of June 16, 1793,† where she writes: "It was in winter (at Christmas) that he was last at Forncett," probably refers to the vacation in 1790-91, just before he took his degree. Still cherishing the idea that he was to enter the ranks of the clergy, she fondly pictured herself living with him at last in their own little parsonage. Comparing Christopher with William, she writes on February 16, with her gift of discrimination:‡

"He is like William, with the same traits in his character, but less highly touched. He is not so ardent in any of his pursuits, but is attached to the same ones which have so irresistible an influence over William that they deprive him of the power of chaining his attention to others discordant with his feelings."

These are words which paint a portrait. His qualities *highly touched*, his ardour, his impatience with uncon-

* From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall.
† Incorrectly dated 1792 in Myers's "Wordsworth."
‡ From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

genial pursuits, are marks of a poetic temperament. Miss Pollard may not have been interested in these effusions, but how charming is the writer's confidence that nothing which concerns her wonderful brother can be tedious! Christopher, she continues, "is steady and sincere in his attachments," and then she makes haste to add:

"William has both these virtues in an eminent degree; and a sort of violence, if I may so term it, which demonstrates itself every day, when the objects of his affection are present with him, in a thousand almost imperceptible attentions to their wishes, in a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men."

Then she gives free rein to her fancy, depicting the life with William for which she longed:

"I look forward to the happiness of receiving you in my little parsonage. I hope you will spend at least a year with me. I have laid the particular scheme of happiness for each season. When I think of winter, I hasten to furnish our little parlour. I close the shutters, set out the tea-table, brighten the fire. When our refreshment is ended, I produce our work, and William brings his book to our table, and contributes at once to our instruction and amusement; and, at intervals, we lay aside the book; and each hazard observations on what has been read, without the fear of ridicule or censure. We talk over past days. We do not sigh for any pleasures beyond our humble habitation,—'the central place of all our joys.' With such romantic dreams I amuse my fancy during many an hour which would otherwise pass heavily along; for kind as are my uncle and aunt, much as I love my cousins, I cannot help heaving many a sigh at the reflection that I have passed one-and-twenty years of my life, and that the first six years only of that time were spent in the enjoyment of the same pleasures that were enjoyed by my brothers, and that I was then too young to be sensible of the blessing. We have been endeared to each other by early misfortune. We in the same moment lost a father, a mother, a home. We have been equally deprived of our patrimony by the cruel hand of lordly

tyranny. These afflictions have all contributed to unite us closer by the bonds of affection, notwithstanding we have been compelled to spend our youth far asunder."

Immediately upon arriving in England, Wordsworth busied himself with preparing for the press his first volume of poetry, "Descriptive Sketches." It is a slim book with broad leaves, handsomely, though carelessly, printed. The title-page is as follows:

"Descriptive Sketches/in verse/taken during a Pedestrian Tour /in the/Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard/Alps/by W. Wordsworth, B.A./Of St. John's, Cambridge

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'Loca pastorum deserta atque otia dia.'
LUCRET.
'Castella in tumulis—
—Et longe saltus lateque vacantes.'
VIRGIL.

London:/Printed for J. Johnson. St. Paul's Churchyard./1793."

If the date of a letter by Dorothy Wordsworth to Jane Pollard has been correctly deciphered as February 16, it would seem that not only this volume, but another, much like it in appearance, were printed very early in the year 1793. The numerous errors in both poems, and Miss Wordsworth's expression of regret that her brother had not shown his poems to some friend for criticism before publication, prove that they were printed in haste, so that it is quite possible they may have appeared by the middle of February. The title-page of the second little book is:

"An/Evening Walk./An Epistle;/In Verse./Addressed to a Young Lady,/from the/Lakes/of the/North of England/by W. Wordsworth, B.A./Of St. John's, Cambridge./London:/Printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard,/1793."

At the end is an advertisement of "Descriptive Sketches," "just published, by the same Author." In the letter referred to above, Miss Wordsworth, after a pathetic complaint that she is still separated from her brothers, says:

"By this time you have doubtless seen my brother William's poems. . . . The scenes which he describes have been viewed with a poet's eye, and are pourtrayed

with a poet's pencil, and the poems contain many passages exquisitely beautiful; but they also contain many faults, the chief of which is obscurity, and a too frequent use of some particular expressions and uncommon words."

And she mentions "viewless" and "moveless," the former of which occurs four times in "Descriptive Sketches," and once in "An Evening Walk," and the latter once in "Descriptive Sketches," and twice in "An Evening Walk"—in the original editions, of course.

"I regret exceedingly," she continues, "that he did not submit these works to the inspection of some friend before their publication, and he also joins with me in this regret. Their faults are such as a young poet was most likely to fall into, and least likely to discover, and what the suggestions of a friend would easily have made him see and at once correct. It is, however, an error he will never fall into again, as he is well aware that he would have gained considerably more credit if the blemishes of which I speak had been corrected. My brother Kit and I, while he was at Forncett, amused ourselves by analyzing every line, and prepared a very bulky criticism, which he was to transmit to William as soon as he could have added to it the remarks of a Cambridge friend."

It is possible that this friend was Coleridge. In Christopher Wordsworth's diary, under date of Tuesday, November 5, 1793, occurs the following delightful entry:

"Roused about nine o'clock by Bilsborrow and Le-Grice with a proposal to become member of a literary society: the members they mentioned as having already come into the plan Coleridge, *Jes.*, Satterthwaite, Rough, and themselves, *Trin. C.*, and Franklin, *Pembroke*. . . . Got all into a box [at a coffee-house] and (having met with the Monthly Review of my Brother's Poems), entered into a good deal of literary and critical conversation on Dr. Darwin, Miss Seward, Mrs. Smith, Bowles, and my Brother. Coleridge spoke of the esteem in which my Brother was holden by a society at Exeter,*

* Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, editor of the Oxford "Wordsworth," discovered that a literary society of twelve members was founded at Exeter in 1786 by Hugh Downman and Jackson, the organist of the cathedral, and that a volume of the essays and verses read at the weekly meetings was published in 1796.

of which Downman and Hole were members, as did Bilsborrow (as he had before told me) of his repute with Dr. Darwin, Miss Seward, etc., etc., at Derby. Coleridge talked Greek, Max. Tyrius he told us, and spouted out of Bowles."

William Bowles and Erasmus Darwin were poets held in high esteem at that time. Bowles occupied the exalted post in Coleridge's mind which Wordsworth was to fill later.

"I had just entered on my seventeenth year," writes Coleridge in "Biographia Literaria," "when the Sonnets of Mr. Bowles, twenty in number, and just then published in a quarto pamphlet, were first made known and presented to me. . . . As my school finances did not permit me to purchase copies, I made within less than a year and a half more than forty transcriptions as the best presents I could offer to those who had in any way won my regard, and with almost equal delight did I receive the three or four following publications of the same author."

With all allowance for Coleridge's readiness to take fire, he cannot be charged with want of discernment in his literary enthusiasms. It means much that he should have perceived in Wordsworth's earliest notes the qualities of freshness and naturalness which he felt in Bowles, and which undoubtedly exist in some at least of the twenty sonnets. As J. Dykes Campbell observed,* had Coleridge first met with Cowper, or with Burns, he would have been less strongly impressed by Bowles. It is remarkable indeed that a boy brought up in a London boarding-school should have received any impulse towards communion with nature from so mild a poet as Bowles, who himself had by no means wholly broken with classical tradition. We simply have to fall back on the reflection that Coleridge had a more apprehensive and sympathetic mind than anyone else then living. As the quotation from Christopher's diary shows, the first impact of Wordsworth's spirit upon Coleridge, an occurrence memorable in the history

* In his "Life of Coleridge."

of poetry and of criticism, probably took place before the autumn of 1793. Coleridge visited his family at Ottery St. Mary in the long vacation of that year. Passing through Exeter, he may have heard the "society" of which he spoke expressing their esteem of Wordsworth's poetry, or, as is far more likely, he may have carried one of the volumes with him from London or Cambridge, and "spouted" the lines of a strange new poet to a wondering provincial audience, himself creating, and perhaps retaining exclusive possession of, the enthusiasm. He tells us in the "Biographia Literaria" that during his first Cambridge vacation he "assisted a friend in a contribution for a literary society in Devonshire."

The two poems which so stirred Coleridge were subjected by Wordsworth to much revision in later editions. This is unfortunate, for their intrinsic merit is at least equalled by their value as a record of his early powers. In considering them, I shall therefore refer always to the editions of 1793. Professor George Herbert Palmer very kindly allowed me once to examine his copies, which belonged to Dorothy Wordsworth, and contain marginal notes and interlineations by the author.

"Descriptive Sketches" is correctly reprinted from the first edition in the Appendix to Vol. I. of Knight's "Poems of William Wordsworth." M. Legouis, who has applied to the study of these two poems his truly wonderful knowledge of our literature, and has traced to many diverse sources their diction, their turns of thought, their allusions, however faint, says that "An Evening Walk" belongs, as regards the style of its composition, to Wordsworth's Cambridge days. This is doubtless true. The poem carries us back, indeed, to Hawkshead. Not only its subject, but its substance in detail, recalls the sleeping lakes and cloud-capped hills of Cumberland. It yields no evidence of foreign travel or of interest in public affairs. Its curiously compounded literary flavour could never have been concocted in France, where its author must have been almost wholly deprived of English books. For there is scarcely

any other poem in our language so artificially constructed, so full of echoes from older writings. It contains every device of the most extreme "poetic licence," every contrivance by which poets of the descriptive school, from Denham to Goldsmith, rendered their own labour light and the task of their readers heavy. Personification, inversion, ellipsis, apostrophe, periphrasis, and all the unnatural pomp of a specially reserved rhetoric, abound in these few hundred lines.* The mere diction is not so bad. It is far less artificial than the grammar, and very frequently the plain and appropriate word is used with a certain naïve courage. But the sentences are constructed in ways sanctioned neither by common practice nor by the venerable usage of great poets. Spenser is less loose, Milton less complex, Shakespeare less broken. The young author showed a rare audacity, or perhaps one should say ignorance of danger, in the length and unsparing fulness of his phrase. He was determined, evidently, to express his thoughts at whatever cost. It is unjust to his great predecessors to hint that their example excuses his excess. In diction, and in diction only, is he indebted to them. Reminiscences of Shakespeare, and particularly of Milton, run like a sweet undertone through the whole poem. Some of the best things in "An Evening Walk" are echoes of "Comus," which has ever been a mine of precious phrases and charming images. Wordsworth himself, in footnotes in the original edition, acknowledged his indebtedness for words, phrases, and images, to Spenser, to Tasso, to the French poet Rosset, to Thomson, to Beattie, to Young,

* Professor Stockton Axson, formerly of Princeton University, and now of the Rice Institute, Texas, has called my attention to the way in which Wordsworth, in both his early long poems, imitates one of Crabbe's favourite mannerisms—his repetition of a key-word in the verse—as, for example, line 438 of "Descriptive Sketches":

"Did all he *wished*, and *wished* but what he ought";

which reminds one of such lines in Crabbe as

"Betrayed by *man*, then left for *man* to scorn."
"Exposing *most* when *most* it yields distress."
"And begs a *poor* protection from the *poor*."

to Burns, to Greenwood, author of a "Poem on Shooting," and to Clark, author of "A Survey of the Lakes." Various quotations are encrusted in "An Evening Walk," among them one from Collins. The most beautiful, and one might have said, the most Wordsworthian lines in the poem,

> The song of mountain streams, unheard by day,
> Now scarcely heard, beguiles my homeward way,

were taken without acknowledgment from Dr. John Brown's (1715-1766) Dedication to Mr. Romney of Cumberland's "Ode to the Sun." Many years afterwards, in his "Guide to the Lakes," Wordsworth quotes with praise the passage from Brown's poem, ending as follows:

> Nor voice, nor sound, broke on the deep serene;
> But the soft murmur of swift-gushing rills,
> Forth issuing from the mountain's distant steep,
> (Unheard till now, and now scarce heard) proclaim'd
> All things at rest, and imag'd the still voice
> Of quiet, whispering in the ear of night.

Though written in heroic couplets, the poem is not remarkable for point and vigour. Indeed, being descriptive, such a semblance of point and vigour as the versification necessarily produces tends to break the pictures into a series of short glimpses of equal length. If the author had, at the time he began his poem, been acquainted with the best models which had recently appeared, with Cowper's "Task" (1785), for example, or at least if he had appreciated them, he would scarcely have chosen the heroic couplet as a medium of description.

As regards his choice of words, the poet shows himself thoroughly dependent upon the example, both good and bad, of his predecessors. As regards the structure of his sentences, he took liberties for which he had no warrant, and which must have been imputed either to innocence or to impudence. He displayed more ambition than most poets of the eighteenth century to achieve a rich variety of musical effects. In this respect he

apparently had in mind " L'Allegro," " Il Penseroso," and " Comus." But his success here was not remarkable.

Has the poem, then, no distinction? Is it in no way superior to other descriptive compositions of that time, in no way indicative of the birth of an original mind? Remembering the enthusiasm of Coleridge, we can do no less than look below the diction and the versification for some deeper quality. And here we find an occasional directness of observation, an occasional freshness of energy, which are indeed worthy of note. The poem is scarcely more than a series of ill-connected pictures, but these pictures, one feels, are records of real sensations. This is the beginning of naturalness. No one could doubt that the writer had seen most of the things he described. And the episode of the mother with her starving children, which was evidently imagined, not remembered, charms by another quality which pervades the poem—namely, a sort of moral fervour. It is quite likely that this passage, which may be readily detached from its context, was written after Wordsworth's return from France. It reveals an interest in the victims of war keener than he would be likely to have felt before that time. The fact that all the pictures are scenes from humble life only reminds us of the democratic simplicity of his early days. Perhaps it may seem presumptuous to pick out the lines which I think likely to have caught the eye of Coleridge. But Coleridge did, and still does, so much to form men's judgment in matters of this kind that the responsibility is his rather than my own. He must, I think, have felt the startling power of imagination in the word " tremulous," when the poem speaks of

> the roar
> That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore.

He must have realized how faithful was the poet's effort to reproduce a natural scene, with its peculiar atmosphere and even its movement, in the following lines:

> When in the south, the wan noon brooding still,
> Breathed a pale steam around the glaring hill,
> And shades of deep embattled clouds were seen
> Spotting the northern cliffs with lights between,

and the rest of the passage. The " subtle sunbeams " that shine in " the dark-brown bason " of the water-brook would arrest his eye, when perchance he had just smiled at the author's conveyance of Milton's epithet " huddling " from " Comus." Perhaps in his native Devonshire he may have witnessed some equivalent for the way the wise sheep-dogs of the Lake country are directed from a distance by their masters, which Wordsworth describes in plain language, with only one inversion, one abbreviation, one substitution of an adjective for an adverb, and one obscure term:

> Waving his hat, the shepherd in the vale
> Directs his winding dog the cliffs to scale,
> That, barking busy 'mid the glittering rocks,
> Hunts, where he points, the intercepted flocks.

The description of the swans, especially that of the female, who " in a mother's care, her beauty's pride forgets," is worthy of a place in almost any bucolic poem, and fairly triumphs over the cruel restrictions of the rhymed couplet. In the account of the soldier's widow, one is struck by the line,

> On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed,

which strangely resembles the lines of Burns's " First Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet ":

> To lie in kilns and barns at e'en
> When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin,
> Is, doubtless, great distress!

and by the poor woman's first-born child being called, in a phrase worthy of Dante, " her elder grief." It is hardly possible that Wordsworth was the first poet to speak of a boat moving slowly over rippling water as a " talking boat," but I do not remember to have seen the expression elsewhere. His line,

> The tremulous sob of the complaining owl,

hits the plaintive note much better than any of the thousand and one statements that it hoots, which for my part I have never heard it do. The couplet,

> Fair Spirits are abroad; in sportive chase
> Brushing with lucid wands the water's face,

is what Wordsworth himself would have termed an expression of fancy, not of imagination. It is highly artificial, but how charming, how like our elder poets! Finally, Coleridge could *not* have understood, but Dorothy would read through brimming tears the heart-felt petition of the poet for a humble home,

> Where we, my friend, to golden days shall rise,
> Till our small share of hardly-paining sighs
> (For sighs will ever trouble human breath)
> Creep hush'd into the tranquil breast of Death.

This was what she longed for, and these lines bore to her the private message and signature of her brother.

"Descriptive Sketches" had a quite different origin from that of "An Evening Walk." It was conceived later, and drawn from sources more widely scattered and less intimately known. It dates in no sense from an earlier occasion than the vacation journey with Jones on the Continent, and the poet said to Miss Fenwick: "Much the greatest part of this poem was composed during my walks upon the banks of the Loire in the years 1791, 1792," a remark which is confirmed, so far as the dates are concerned, in what appears to be his own handwriting, in the copy belonging to Professor Palmer. Its general plan is very simple. We have first a passage commending foot-travel, then an extremely brief summary in eight lines of the march through France, followed by a series of loosely connected pictures—the Grande Chartreuse, the Lake of Como, a storm in the Alps, other Swiss scenes—and finally the praise of poverty, simplicity, liberty, and republicanism. Many of the same extravagances of diction which amazed the reader of "An Evening Walk" mar the second work also. There is, however, less borrowing from other poets. The sentence-structure is even more arbitrary and confused. The musical effects are, naturally, more ambitious and more varied, though many blemishes may be detected by any sensitive ear. The "picturesque," a term which Wordsworth scornfully rejected, but which is the only one

really applicable to his chief efforts in this piece, is achieved by violence, but it is achieved. There are many striking scenes, and some which charm by their completeness and inner harmony. In " An Evening Walk " the human element was supplied by the soldier's widow and her children, by an occasional shepherd or swain, and chiefly by personifying every object and idea mentioned. In " Descriptive Sketches " the widow reappears as a gipsy of the Grisons, with her babe, wandering over the mountains in a storm by night. We have alluring maidens, whose charms were much reduced in later editions. Personification is still carried to excess; and in the second half of the poem a new element, scarcely foreshadowed at all in " An Evening Walk," appears and dominates the work. This is the cause of Man as Man, and to see how it swept the poet on a new current away from his original design, we must read, not the softened conclusion in late editions, but the lines as they were first printed.

To consider once more for a moment the workmanship of the poem, it must be admitted that in general composition or ordering of parts it lacks unity; and although I think M. Legouis sometimes strains a point in attempting to show that this or that word or phrase was borrowed, there can be no doubt that he has convicted Wordsworth of astonishing verbal dependence upon poetic tradition, and, indeed, of having chosen bad models and exceeded their faults. Furthermore, not even by making allowance for the poet's youth and exuberance can we escape being astounded by the depths of his obscurity and the heights of his audacity. Can anyone represent to himself " Silence, on her night of wing "? Can anyone read without a smile, in the account of the riots and gunfire at the Grande Chartreuse,

> The thundering tube the aged angler hears,
> And swells the groaning torrent with his tears ?

The full enormity of the following lines is withheld from a reverent reader of Wordsworth until dogged syntax

insists that " his " can have no other antecedent than " infant Rhine." " Shall we," the poet writes,

> led where Viamala's chasms confine
> Th' indignant waters of the infant Rhine,
> Bend o'er th' abyss ?—the else impervious gloom
> His burning eyes with fearful light illume.

Describing a chamois-hunter cut off from retreat by slippery rocks, he imparts a singular piece of information with an outrageous figure of speech:

> To wet the peak's impracticable sides
> He opens of his feet the sanguine tides,
> Weak and more weak the issuing current eyes
> Lapp'd by the panting tongue of thirsty skies.

Some of the longer passages in which the poet strives to reproduce the sublimity and terror of the Alps are so confused as to be almost unintelligible. For anything like such overwhelming of mere grammar by poetic vision, we must turn to Shelley's " Revolt of Islam " and " Queen Mab," and these are clean-cut in comparison. In " An Evening Walk " we find little that is not purely sensuous. Physical observation, though recorded as if nature were an assemblage of souls, masculine and feminine, with feelings like those of men and women, forms the basis of " Descriptive Sketches " also. No other poet of the eighteenth century, except Dr. Darwin, had indulged so riotously in personification. Few, also, it must be remarked, had been willing to content themselves to such an extent, without ulterior purpose, with description.

Three lines near the beginning and an occasional reference later to the pleasures of Melancholy might lead to the overhasty inference that the poet was in love when he set out upon his journey in 1790:

> Me, lur'd by hope her sorrows to remove,
> A heart, that could not much itself approve,
> O'er Gallia's wastes of corn dejected led.

But we have already seen that the cause of his self-reproach was his failure to enjoy the prescribed studies

of the university, and his long letter to his sister in September, 1790, could be taken against a thousand poetic sighs as evidence of a free and joyous heart, a mind alert and keen, and a body hardened by a triumphal march of many weeks through glorious scenery. These professions of sadness may be dismissed as pure convention, as belonging to the *genre* of descriptive poetry, and as what is to be expected of very young writers.

Something more formal and dogmatic than anything yet prompted by his native independence begins to show itself in the second half of the poem. A corresponding change in style appears. The following lines might have been written by the hand of Pope recalled to life for the purpose of condensing into maxims the philosophy of Rousseau:

> Once Man entirely free, alone and wild,
> Was bless'd as free—for he was Nature's child.
> He, all superior but his God disdain'd,
> Walk'd none restraining, and by none restrain'd,
> Confess'd no law but what his reason taught,
> Did all he wish'd, and wish'd but what he ought.

From this he proceeds to celebrate the ancient victories of the Swiss over the Austrians, and thence comes to depict the " homely pleasures," the contentment, and the hardships of the mountaineers.

I think it has never been remarked that the poem contains a distinct confession of religious unbelief. Yet this is plainly the meaning of four lines which conclude the passage describing a pilgrimage to the shrine of Einsiedeln. Addressing the credulous worshippers, he cries:

> Without one hope her written griefs to blot,
> Save in the land where all things are forgot,
> My heart, alive to transports long unknown,
> Half wishes your delusion were its own.

Humane aspirations begin to crowd upon the images of nature with which till now he has been content. The mention of Chamonix makes him remember that Savoy is not free, and political enslavement, he knows, means poverty:

At such an hour I heav'd the human sigh,
When roar'd the sullen Arve in anger by,
That not for thee, delicious vale! unfold
Thy reddening orchards, and thy fields of gold;
That thou, the slave of slaves, art doomed to pine,
While no Italian arts their charms combine
To teach the skirt of thy dark cloud to shine.

With a truer understanding of political economy than those possess who argue that the extravagance of the rich gives employment to the poor, he perceives that luxury in one place entails misery in another:

In the wide range of many a weary round,
Still have my pilgrim feet unfailing found,
As despot courts their blaze of gems display,
Ev'n by the secret cottage far away
The lily of domestic joy decay;
While Freedom's farthest hamlets blessings share,
Found still beneath her smile, and only there.
The casement shade more luscious woodbine binds,
And to the door a neater pathway winds,
At early morn the careful housewife, led
To cull her dinner from its garden bed,
Of weedless herbs a healthier prospect sees,
While hum with busier joy her happy bees;
In brighter rows her table wealth aspires,
And laugh with merrier blaze her evening fires;
Her infant's cheeks with fresher roses glow,
And wilder graces sport around their brow;
By clearer taper lit a cleanlier board
Receives at supper hour her tempting hoard;
The chamber hearth with fresher boughs is spread,
And whiter is the hospitable bed.

Turning to France, with an affectionate outcry,

And thou! fair favoured region! which my soul
Shall love, till Life has broke her golden bowl,

he declares that nature is more beautiful in that land since Freedom has made its fields and skies her peculiar care. Though war is about to commence, yet may that land rejoice, for new virtues are springing even from war's flames:

Nature, as in her prime, her virgin reign
Begins, and Love and Truth compose her train;
With pulseless hand, and fix'd unwearied gaze,
Unbreathing Justice her still beam surveys.

Even Consumption shall cease to ravage a land that enjoys the blessings of Liberty. As this poem was published after the September massacres, after Wordsworth had seen with his own eyes the Jacobin party locked in a grip of implacable frenzy with the moderates of the Assembly, after the King had been executed, there can be no question of the firmness of his republicanism and of his nerves. The final apostrophe, beginning

> Oh give, great God, to Freedom's waves to ride
> Sublime o'er Conquest, Avarice, and Pride,

is feverish and almost incoherent, but a clear and unmistakable denunciation of the coalition of kings against France rings out in the lines:

> And grant that every sceptred child of clay,
> Who cries, presumptuous, " here their tides shall stay,"
> Swept in their anger from th' affrighted shore,
> With all his creatures sink—to rise no more.

In taking leave of this singular poem, let us recall the cordial but discriminating words of Coleridge in the " Biographia Literaria ":

" During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's first publications, entitled Descriptive Sketches; and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced. In the form, style, and manner of the whole poem, and in the structure of the particular lines and periods, there is an harshness and an acerbity connected and combined with words and images all aglow, which might recall those products of the vegetable world, where gorgeous blossoms rise out of the hard and thorny rind and shell, within which the rich fruit was elaborating. The language was not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention than poetry (at all events, than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom, therefore, justified the complaint of obscurity."

Wordsworth's life in 1793 is shrouded with a degree of mystery that is itself mysterious. A poet in his twenty-fourth year is not likely to live without warm friends and curious acquaintances, is not likely to withdraw from social scenes or to be a niggardly correspondent. Yet not a single letter of the young republican, dating from this year, has ever been printed—except the draft of a public epistle, which we shall consider later. Four of his sister's letters to Jane Pollard*—or, rather, fragments of them—written in this year have been published, and in his old age the poet made a few references to this time in notes to his poems. Evidently his relatives not only disapproved of him then, but continued long afterwards to do their utmost to cover with oblivion the season of his unripeness. Later, he too joined the conspiracy against the memory of his youthful self. It has been lightly assumed that he lived while in London with his brother Richard, but I know of nothing to prove this. His income could not have been more than enough for a most frugal existence.

See p. 173

On Sunday morning, June 16, 1793, his sister wrote to Miss Pollard:† "I cannot foresee the day of my felicity, the day on which I am once more to find a home under the same roof as my brother. All is still obscure and dark." She pleads for sympathy with her "little schemes of felicity," her "scenes of happiness, happiness arising from the exercise of the social affections in retirement and rural quiet." She says she often hears from her dear brother William. "I am very anxious about him just now," she adds, "as he has not yet got an employment. He is looking out, and wishing for the opportunity of engaging himself as tutor to some young gentleman, an office for which he is peculiarly

* The fragments which Professor Knight prints as Letters XXVI. and XXVII. in "Letters of the Wordsworth Family" are really parts of one letter, and it was of later date than the one printed as No. XXVIII. There is also an unpublished letter, of which I have seen a copy. Mr. Gordon Wordsworth thinks it was written at Forncett early in June, 1793. In it Dorothy mentions her expectation of going to Halifax, and also of sharing the society of her dear William.

† From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall.

well qualified. Oh, Jane, the last time we were together he won my affection to a degree which I cannot describe, his attentions to me were such as the most sensible of mortals must have been touched with; there was no pleasure that he would not have given up with joy for half an hour's conversation with me. It was in winter at Christmas that he was last at Forncett." She describes her joys on that memorable occasion, which was at the close of 1790. By her brother's advice, probably, and for his sake, she is now studying French, "fagging it tolerably hard," she says. It is a melancholy fact that not until the next autumn or winter after his return from France did he see his adorable sister. Her passion fed on patience, which nourished it for a sustained and lofty flight. It is through her eyes chiefly that we see him at this time. Her anxiety is equalled only by her confidence. Does he hold with those atrocious French? No truer Englishman exists! Can it be true he is a heretic? Why, he is her brother William, and the charge needs no further refutation! Is he idle and unproductive? The finest and rarest qualities, she is certain, lie ready for employment in his rich nature if only he has a chance to teach. How eagerly she catches at his assent, in the last lines of "An Evening Walk," to her long-cherished hope that they might live together in a cottage of their own! She even includes Miss Pollard in her dream of felicity:

"Why are you not seated with me? and my dear William, why is he not here also? I could almost fancy that I see you both near me. I hear you point out a spot where, if we could erect a little cottage and call it our own, we could be the happiest of human beings. I see my brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat as I fancy, ever ready at our call, hastening to assist us in painting. Our parlour is in a moment furnished; our garden is adorned by magic; the roses and honeysuckles spring at our command; the wood behind the house lifts its head, furnishing us with a winter's shelter and a summer's noonday shade. My dear friend, I trust that ere long you will be, without the aid of imagination, the companion of my walks, and

my dear William may be of our party. He is now going upon a tour to the West of England, along with a gentleman who was formerly a schoolfellow, a man of fortune, who is to bear all the expense of the journey, and only requests the favour of William's company, as he is averse to the idea of going alone. As William has not the prospect of any immediate employment, I think he cannot pursue a better scheme. He is perfectly at liberty to quit this companion as soon as anything more advantageous offers."

Then she bursts into an ecstatic strain, in full accord with her most loving nature, and justified, no doubt, by qualities in her brother known as yet to her alone:

"But it is enough to say that I am likely to have the happiness of introducing you to my beloved brother. You must forgive me for talking so much of him; my affection hurries me on, and makes me forget that you cannot be so much interested in the subject as I am. You do not know him; you do not know how amiable he is. Perhaps you reply, 'But I know how blinded you are.' Well, my dearest, I plead guilty at once; I *must* be blind; he cannot be so pleasing as my fondness makes him. I am willing to allow that half the virtues with which I fancy him endowed are the creation of my love; but surely I may be excused! He was never tired of comforting his sister; he never left her in anger; he always met her with joy; he preferred her society to every other pleasure—or rather, when we were so happy as to be within each other's reach, he had no pleasure when we were compelled to be divided. Do not, then, expect too much from this brother of whom I have delighted so to talk to you. In the first place, you must be with him more than once before he will be perfectly easy in conversation. In the second place, his person is not in his favour—at least, I should think not; but I soon ceased to discover this—nay, I almost thought that the opinion which I had formed was erroneous. He is, however, certainly rather plain, though otherwise has an extremely thoughtful countenance; but when he speaks it is often lighted up by a smile which I think very pleasing. But enough, he is my brother; why should I describe him? I shall be launching again into panegyric."

She returns with undaunted persistence to her plans for a meeting with him:*

"My brother's tour will not be completed till October, at which time they [*i.e.*, William and William Calvert, the young man with whom he was to travel] will perhaps make a stand in North Wales, from whence he can very conveniently take a trip to Halifax. It is more than two years and a half since we last saw each other, and so ardent is our desire for a meeting that we are determined upon procuring to ourselves this happiness, if it were even to be purchased at the price of a journey across the kingdom; but from North Wales into Yorkshire the distance is nothing. If, therefore, my brother does not meet with any employment which is likely to fix him before I go to Halifax, we shall certainly meet there; but, if he should be engaged, we are determined to see each other at Forncett."

Then she tells her friend, who, let us hope, was as discreet as Wordsworth's biographers have been, why the meeting had not taken place already:†

"If my brother makes an engagement which will take him out of England or confine him to one spot for any length of time, then he is determined to come and see me at Forncett, if it be but for a day, though he has never received an invitation from my uncle, and though he can have no possible inducement but the pleasure of seeing me. You must know that this favourite brother of mine happens to be no favourite with any of his near relations, except his brothers, by whom he is adored—I mean by John and Christopher, for Richard's disposition and his are totally different, and though they never have any quarrels, yet there is not that friendship between them which can only exist where two hearts are found to sympathize with each other in all their griefs and joys. I have not time or room to explain to you the foundation of the prejudices of my two uncles against my dear William; the subject is an unpleasant one for a letter; it will employ us more agreeably in conversation. Then, though I must confess that he has been somewhat to blame, yet I think I shall prove to you that the excuse might have been found in his natural disposition.

* From the original, in the possession of Mr. Marshall. † *Ibid.*

> In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
> Fond of each gentle, etc., etc.

That verse of Beattie's 'Minstrel' always reminds me of him, and indeed the whole character of Edwin resembles much what William was when I first knew him after my leaving Halifax.

> And oft he traced the uplands to survey,
> When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,
> The crimson cloud, blue main and mountain gray,
> And lake dim gleaming on the dusky lawn,
> Far to the west the long long vale withdrawn.

I have been much disappointed that my uncle has not invited William to Forncett, but he is no favourite with him. Alas! Alas!"

Was ever the fraternal relation endowed with more romantic glamour? Was there ever a more ardent worship of a brother by a sister? It never failed, and the companionship of a lifetime was maintained at this high pitch, if not of expression, yet of intense feeling.

Her brother, in writing to her, broke through the formal style which often served as a necessary check to the violence of his emotions. Dorothy proudly transcribes two passages from his letters.

"The first," she explains, "is from the letter he wrote in answer to mine, informing him of my certainty of visiting Halifax. He says: 'Now, my dearest friend, how much do I wish that each emotion of pleasure or pain that visits your heart should excite a similar pleasure or a similar pain within me, by that sympathy which will almost identify us when we have stolen to our little cottage. I am determined to see you as soon as ever I have entered into an engagement. Immediately I will write to my uncle, and tell him that I cannot think of going anywhere before I have been with you. Whatever answer he gives me, I certainly will make a point of once more mingling my transports with yours. Alas! my dear sister, how soon must this happiness expire; yet there are moments worth ages.' . . . In another letter, in which he informs me of his intention to accept his friend Calvert's offer, he says, 'It will be easy for me to see you at Halifax. Oh, my dear,

dear sister! with what transport shall I again meet you! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight! So eager is my desire to see you, that all obstacles vanish. I see you in a moment running, or rather flying to my arms.'"

Wordsworth's biographers have had little to say about the breach which existed at this time between him and his uncles. Professor Knight, for example, omits the sentence about "obstacles" in the above quotation. The facts appear to be, however, that Dr. Cookson refused to let him visit Dorothy at Forncett, and that his supply of money was so greatly reduced as to make travelling impossible. Yet it could not have been only lack of money that kept him from going to Forncett all that year, to break the cruel separation, as hard for him probably as for her. We must believe that he was denied admission to the house that sheltered his beloved sister; hence the bitterness of her cry, so often repeated, against the sad fate of orphans. Hence, too, her eager calculating of the chances of obtaining tardy justice from the Earl of Lonsdale. These expressions of longing, which I have quoted, these visions of life in a cottage, did not come from a repining nature or from sentimentality; they were forced from her by a sense of injustice and of a privation that was growing unbearable. No help was to be expected from their elder brother, Richard, who was uncongenial. The hope that William might be restored to grace by entering the ministry had become ludicrously faint. He had almost passed the point where that suggestion could be made again. She did not even wish it to be known that she was to meet him at Halifax.

Poor Dorothy's day of felicity was not to come quite as soon as she expected. She lost her purse, containing six guineas, which she had saved for her visit to Halifax. This was more than made up, however, by generous gifts from her brother Richard and her uncle Crackanthorpe, of whom she now began to entertain a better opinion, saying that he had been influenced against her only by his wife, a proud and selfish woman. But her

plan was upset by Calvert's horse. It seems that the young men began their journey late in the summer. They spent some months in the Isle of Wight, and were probably at or near Salisbury, on their way to Wales, when the animal dragged them and their carriage into a ditch. The vehicle was ruined. Calvert rode off north on the steed, and the poet, after wandering for two days over Salisbury Plain, had no other resource but to hasten to the home of his old friend Robert Jones in North Wales. He went by way of Bath and Bristol to the banks of the " silvan Wye," whence he proceeded on foot. It was on this journey that he met, within the area of Goodrich Castle, the little girl whom he made the heroine of " We are Seven," although he did not write the poem at that time. Five years later he passed that way again, reposed under the same " dark sycamore," saw again the same hedgerows and the same farms, " green to the very door." If anyone still holds the view that Wordsworth, for two or three years after his return from France, suffered a dulling of sensibilities, an obscuration of spirits, was too sombre, too much absorbed in uncongenial politics to feel the thrill of nature, and that his poetic faculties were not reawakened until the soothing influence of his sister restored him to a more easy-going frame of mind, to optimism and peace —if anyone still holds this view, which was set forth in the " Memoirs," and has been very commonly held, what can he say of the passage in " Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," which describes, though disclaiming the attempt, what his feelings were in 1793 ?

> Like a roe
> I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
> Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
> Wherever nature led: more like a man
> Flying from something that he dreads than one
> Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
> (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
> And their glad animal movements all gone by)
> To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
> What then I was. The sounding cataract
> Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,

> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms, were then to me
> An appetite; a feeling and a love,
> That had no need of a remoter charm,
> By thought supplied, nor any interest
> Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is passed,
> And all its aching joys are now no more,
> And all its dizzy raptures.

Yet it must be admitted that these high spirits were a rebound from a state of dejection in which he had been plunged a few days before. It was on Salisbury Plain that he had in part conceived the melancholy tale which now bears the title "Guilt and Sorrow." And his sad thoughts there were due to reflecting on the probable mission of the British fleet which he had seen from the Isle of Wight. In the Advertisement prefixed to the above-mentioned poem in 1842 he wrote:

"During the latter part of the summer of 1793, having passed a month in the Isle of Wight, in view of the fleet which was then preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war, I left the place with melancholy forebodings. The American war was still fresh in memory. The struggle which was beginning, and which many thought would be brought to a speedy close by the irresistible arms of Great Britain being added to those of the allies, I was assured in my own mind would be of long continuance, and productive of distress and misery beyond all possible calculation. This conviction was pressed upon me from having been a witness, during a long residence in revolutionary France, of the spirit which prevailed in that country."

Far less cautious is his language in "The Prelude," which was written much earlier, and reproduces more faithfully his original emotion:*

> When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
> In that unworthy service was prepared
> To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
> A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
> I saw them in their rest, a sojourner
> Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
> In that delightful island which protects

* "Prelude," X. 314.

Their place of convocation—there I heard,
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
A monitory sound that never failed,—
The sunset cannon. While the orb went down
In the tranquillity of nature, came
That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
Without a spirit overcast by dark
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
Sorrow for humankind, and pain of heart.

The joy with which he took refuge in nature's bosom, when he found himself alone and far from every suggestion of discord, on the banks of the sweet inland river, contrasted strongly with the civic care which had oppressed him ever since his return from France. He had come home, "a patriot of the world." Rural England, erewhile, he tells us, his "tuneful haunt," seemed unsuited to his mood. He felt more in harmony with the general stir of the great city, where public questions were in the air. And though he took but a languid interest in the anti-slavery movement, which was then receiving one of those checks that only serve to increase the zeal of its friends, this indifference was due to his conviction that if the French Revolution prospered, slavery, that "most rotten branch of human shame," would vanish with a host of other evils.* As high as was his trust, so low was his despair, when his own country, which he had heard Frenchmen praise for her love of liberty, declared war upon the land of his hopes:

What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!

His moral nature, he says, had received no shock down to that very moment. All else had been progress; this was revolution. The order of his attachments was inverted. Old loyalty to native land, instead of becoming

* His sister's interest was very keen. She sent a message to Jane Pollard's father, asking him to vote for Wilberforce, and wrote to her friend: "I hope you were an Immediate Abolitionist, and are angry with the House of Commons for continuing the traffic in human flesh so long as till '96, but you will rejoice also that so much has been done. I hate Mr. Dundas."

merged in a more comprehensive allegiance to human welfare, was found to be a principle of evil. In what must have been the bitterest sort of triumph he rejoiced, "yea, exulted," he tells us, when Englishmen were overthrown by thousands, left without glory on the field, or driven to shameful flight. When in church prayers were offered up or praises for English victories, he sat silent, and

> Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

This is a state of mind to which the best of men have been driven, and will, with the advance of civilization, be more frequently driven, when placed in a similar plight. Accustomed to nourish their patriotism on hopes of peace, justice, and mercy, they feel only disappointment and dismay when their country takes what they regard as a backward step. The excitations to war, which awaken what the multitudes call patriotism, put their love of country to the severest strain. Nowhere shall we find a more vivid account of the moral distress which the minority have to endure when their country, against their principles, goes to arms, than the one Wordsworth wrote in the tenth book of "The Prelude":*

> Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear
> By violence, at one decisive rent,
> From the best youth in England their dear pride,
> Their joy, in England.

And this, too, he says, at a time

> In which apostasy from ancient faith
> Seemed but conversion to a higher creed.

As news came from France, bad enough in itself, and always rendered more fearful in the telling, his spirits drooped, and he was obliged to use all his philosophy to maintain the wider outlook. How much easier it would have been to accept the popular and national prejudice, to admit that his hopes in man had been vain, to let his heart beat with the fever of warlike passion! The awful months of the Terror brought almost nothing but disheartening stories. Here and there, it is true, he

* "Prelude," X. 299.

culled eagerly a tale of heroism, some witness that even the victims of Jacobin fury preserved to the end their trust in the Republic. He treasured the last words of Madame Roland. After the expulsion of his friends, the Girondists, from the Convention, accounts of their deaths, one by one, reached him either through the newspapers or through private letters;* and few, if any, of them renounced their faith in republican principles. Here was some consolation. He must have shared the view of all competent French observers, that the Jacobins derived their direful power from public fear of the coalition. Thus he must have held England in part responsible for their atrocities. Deep as was his horror for the fanatics in Paris, he hated bitterly the foreign enemies of France:†

> It was a lamentable time for man,
> Whether a hope had e'er been his or not;
> A woeful time for them whose hopes survived
> The shock; most woeful for those few who still
> Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:
> They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
> Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved;
> The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
> And throttled with an infant godhead's might
> The snakes about her cradle; that was well,
> And as it should be; yet no cure for them
> Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
> Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.

* As we shall see later, Thomas Carlyle, in his "Reminiscences," says that Wordsworth told him, about 1840, that he had witnessed the execution of Gorsas, which took place October 7, 1793. If this statement is correct, we must suppose that the poet returned to France after the war was declared, and in the midst of the Terror. We should guard against placing too much trust in this anecdote, for Carlyle may have misunderstood him, though no man could have been more alert for such information than the author of the "French Revolution"; yet, if true, it would agree with many things, among them Wordsworth's statement that he spent fourteen or fifteen months in France after his arrival there in the autumn of 1791, and his account of his dreams of arrests, executions, and heart-rending farewells. The excited tone of the tenth book of "The Prelude," and many allusions in Dorothy's letters and journals in after-years, would be easier to understand if we admitted a short visit to France in 1793. The motives for his concealing the fact have been already indicated.

† "Prelude," X. 384.

It is worth while to observe that his satisfaction in the defeat of the Allies continued at least so late as 1805, when the tenth book of "The Prelude" was written, and that he never afterwards saw fit to alter these words.

His sufferings were intense and protracted. His days were melancholy, his nights miserable. For months and years after that fatal summer and autumn he rarely slept without seeing horrible visions, of victims on the scaffold and of dungeons "where the dust was laid with tears." In his dreams he was entangled in long orations, striving to clear himself before unjust tribunals, and treacherously deserted. The stage of these horrid scenes was familiar to him. He had known some of the actors. His hallucinations were echoes of the dreadful night he spent in Paris a year before. The gentle forms of nature had won his worship in boyhood. Now pity and sorrow, the handmaids of his second love, the love of man, exacted a "different ritual"—tears and groans and ghastly dreams. For consolation there came to him, he reverently dared to think, something like the spirit that must have supported the ancient prophets when they denounced the doom of God upon a guilty city. It was the thought that nature was not to blame, that the ideals of democracy were not to blame:*

> When a taunt
> Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
> Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
> From popular government and equality,"
> I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
> Of wild belief engrafted on their names
> By false philosophy had caused the woe,
> But a terrific reservoir of guilt
> And ignorance filled up from age to age,
> That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
> But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

Thus unshaken in the citadel of his faith, though sorely harassed in the outworks of social relations and practical life, he came through that most trying year.

He was not by any means the only person in England who was perplexed by the conflict of loyalties. Many

* "Prelude," X. 469.

were afflicted, though none perhaps so acutely as he was, partly because of his fine sensibilities, and partly because he had left his heart behind in France. History has scarcely done justice to the depth and extent of the moral support which the Revolutionary movement received in Great Britain between the opening of the American War and the proclamation of the French Empire in 1804, and especially between 1789 and 1794. Lost causes are too soon forgotten, though sometimes the strongest threads in the web of life are those that lie unseen below the surface. It has been the fashion, and in some respects it is a good fashion, to glorify Burke and Pitt. They, with Nelson and Wellington, are the grand figures of the tapestry. But when they have received all the admiration that has been bestowed upon them, it is still necessary to turn the fabric round, and look at the suppressed weaving on the other side, if we would really know the whole truth. There can hardly be any doubt now that at the opening of the war with France Englishmen of finest sympathies and clearest reason were for the most part opposed to the action of their government. Some were theoretical republicans, others merely liberal, others opposed to war on any account. It is not surprising that popular prejudice in war-time nicknamed them all Jacobins.

Wordsworth's connection with the English "Jacobins," with the most extreme element opposed to the war and actively agitating in favour of making England a republic, was much closer than has been generally admitted. In the first place, he appears to have associated himself very soon after his return from France with other young men of radical opinions. We have a hint of this in "The Prelude," when, referring to the declaration of war, he says:

> Not in my single self alone I found,
> But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
> Change and subversion from that hour.

It is not without significance that "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" should have been printed

for Joseph Johnson. He was the publisher of Dr. Priestley, Horne Tooke, and Mary Wollstonecraft. His shop was a favourite meeting-place of republicans and free-thinkers. Paine and Godwin frequented it, and so, for a time, did William Blake, though his religious persuasions were of a very different nature from theirs. Johnson published *The Analytical Review*, which had been founded in 1788. He was hospitable and generous, a man of broad literary culture and philanthropic views. Wordsworth almost certainly met Godwin and Horne Tooke at Johnson's table or in his shop.

Very likely he met there, too, a former fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, the Rev. Gilbert Wakefield. He was a man distinguished for classical scholarship, a not unworthy antagonist of Porson, and the very incarnation of radicalism. The one mistake of his life, as he thought, was entering the ministry of the Church of England. He soon rectified it by becoming a Unitarian and vacating his college fellowship in 1779. He connected himself with no second religious body, for he disapproved of public worship, an attitude which he defended in a tract, which became the parent of many others. He was associated with Dr. Priestley and John Aikin as a teacher in Warrington Academy, a school founded on liberal religious and political principles. It would almost seem as if none but heretics at that time felt the inconsistency between war and Christianity. War in general and the war against France in particular, were, with cruelty of every kind, the objects of Wakefield's detestation. His "Enquiry into the Expediency and Propriety of Public and Social Worship," appearing in 1791, made him a broad mark for suspicion, and a few years later he and Johnson, his publisher, were prosecuted and convicted on account of an attack he made on Pitt's conduct of the government. Wakefield was sent to gaol for two years, where he was comforted by the friendship of Fox and many other eminent men, who raised a large subscription for his family. He survived his imprisonment only a few months, dying of typhus fever in 1801. Johnson was sentenced to nine

months' imprisonment, and to pay a fine of fifty pounds. Wakefield's former associate, John Aikin, M.D., had removed to London in 1792, having lost his medical practice at Yarmouth in consequence of writing pamphlets against the Corporation and Tests Acts and in favour of Dissent and political reform. It was Aikin who declared that, although he had no idea of becoming "the hero of a cause, yet at his age it would be trifling not to have a character, and cowardly not to avow and stick to it."

Dr. Priestley's house in Birmingham had been burned in 1791, with his manuscripts and scientific instruments, by a mob which was notoriously incited to violence by respectable "Church and King" people. His opposition to the war was, more directly than his Unitarianism, the cause of his unpopularity. He had been elected a citizen of the French Republic, and was outspoken in its favour. After he was driven from Birmingham, and before he took refuge in Pennsylvania, he was bold enough to live for three years in London, and what would be more likely than that Wordsworth should meet him at their publisher's ?* At all events, whether he knew these men or not, Wordsworth agreed with them in politics, and probably also in religion. That he suffered some of the social ostracism which was the common portion of the so-called English Jacobins, has already been shown. He engaged also in the same kind of work which occupied them—the writing of tracts or pamphlets.

Nothing outside of "The Prelude" throws more light on Wordsworth's character and the convictions of his early manhood than a paper he wrote in reply to an attack upon the principles of the French Revolution, published by a celebrated Church dignitary, Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff. This versatile and interesting man had become a conspicuous figure in public life. With only a few months' preparation, he had fitted himself for a professorship of chemistry at Cambridge, and actually made important discoveries and

* Dorothy Wordsworth, I have been told, was acquainted with the Priestley family, and visited them.

wrote valuable scientific treatises. With equal buoyancy he returned to theology when the Regius Professorship of Divinity fell vacant. He was well known as a broad-minded prelate, favourable to liberal government, and courteous even in theological controversy. He was an eminently successful man, and the measure of the sacrifice made for principle by Gilbert Wakefield, a no less able scholar, is shown in the contrast between his poverty and persecutions and the Bishop's many rich livings. Early in 1793 Bishop Watson published a sermon he had preached a long while before, on "The Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both Rich and Poor," drawing consolation—for the rich—from the text: "The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the Maker of them all." He had been moved to prescribe this anodyne to the sufferings of the people because he observed a spirit of unrest among them and of unwillingness to engage in a war, the burden of which would, as usual, fall most heavily upon the labouring class. Without exhibiting so much romantic sensibility at the execution of Louis XVI. as Burke was to display, he still was shocked at that event, and, writing a political appendix to his sermon, dated four days after the fatal 21st of January, had them printed together. The appendix is a defence of the British Constitution, with strictures on French affairs. "I have no hesitation," he says, "in declaring that the object which the French seemed to have in view at the commencement of their revolution had my hearty approbation." And in this statement he does himself no more than justice, for on October 12, 1791, he had written to the Duke of Grafton:*

"No history, ancient or modern, furnishes an example similar to what has happened in France; an example of a whole people (the exceptions are not worthy of notice) divesting themselves of the prejudices of birth and education, in civil and religious concerns, and adopting the principles of philosophy and good sense. . . . Not-

* See "Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson, written by Himself," 1817.

withstanding all the ridicule which apostate Whigs have attempted to throw on the rights of man, such rights are founded in nature; they exist antecedent to and independent of civil society; and the French constitution is the only one in the world which has deliberately asserted these rights, and supported them to their full extent."

Moreover, in the autumn of 1792, after Louis XVI. had been dethroned and imprisoned in the Temple, Bishop Watson had written to Earl Stanhope, who possessed much influence in France, suggesting that he should propose to the National Assembly a means of " establishing their new republic on a solid foundation " —namely, by assigning to the King one of his palaces for a residence, with a large pension, subject to forfeiture on any act of treason against the State. It was not merely the events of the succeeding three months in France, culminating in the execution of a monarch, wicked as that act appeared to the Bishop, which made him change his tone. He was sophistical enough to feel justified in using a different language in a public address. He aimed at the popular ear, and adapted his methods accordingly. Furthermore, he was not incapable of flattering George III. by coming out roundly, Whig as he was, in favour of ideas which the Tories, if they did not possess them exclusively, at least were loudest in uttering. He tells us himself that the King complimented him in the warmest terms " on the conciseness, clearness, and utility of this little publication "; and gives us reason, from the following incident, to doubt whether his motives were altogether disinterested: " On this occasion, when the King was praising what I had written, I said to him, ' I love to come forward in a moment of danger.' His reply was so quick and proper that I will put it down, ' I see you do, and it is a mark of a man of high spirit.' "

The chief points in the Bishop's exhortation are as follows: He declares that a republic is of all forms of government the one he most dislikes, because it is most oppressive to the bulk of the people, who live in it under the tyranny of their equals. He is shocked beyond

coherent utterance by the execution of a king. He maintains that the greatest freedom that can be enjoyed by man in a state of civil society is afforded to every individual by the British Constitution. He argues, on grounds of expedience, in favour of monarchy. He defends aristocratic institutions. He deprecates the use of the Press "when employed to infuse into the minds of the lowest orders of the community disparaging ideas concerning the constitution of their country." Failing utterly to perceive that the doctrine of equality means equality of opportunity and absence of privilege, and not merely equality before the law, he wanders off into platitudes about equal division of land, the poor laws, and the charity of the rich. The poor are not so very badly off, he thinks, and there are hospitals, relief funds, etc., which would not exist if all men were on a level.

Wordsworth, who appears to have been acquainted with Bishop Watson's previous character for liberal views, felt the unpleasant inconsistency between that character and the spirit of this pamphlet. Coming home from France full of the importance of the struggle there going on, and impressed with the high principles which animated not only the best, but some of the most extreme and dangerous Revolutionists, he resolved to lose no time before following the example of Beaupuy and "performing the oath of his apostleship." The English in general appeared to him sunk in apathy. If he could not sacrifice himself with his Girondist friends in France, he could at least join the little band of English martyrs. He wrote a long reply to Bishop Watson, which was found among his papers after his death, but seems never to have printed during his life.* I doubt if he even sent a copy of it to the Bishop, who makes no mention of such a letter in his "Anecdotes." The manuscript is carefully written in Wordsworth's own hand, and the title he prefixed to it is, "A Letter to the Bishop

* It was barely mentioned by his nephew, in the "Memoirs," Vol. I., p. 78, and was published for the first time by Grosart, in 1876. I have not seen the manuscript, and must depend on Grosart's description of it.

of Llandaff on the Extraordinary Avowal of his Political Opinions, contained in the Appendix to his late Sermon: by a Republican." There is no date. Considering that it was written by a young man of twenty-three, or even making no such allowance, this tract deserves to rank with the writings of Burke, Paine, and Mackintosh, as one of the most philosophical treatises occasioned in England by the Revolutionary movement. It goes as far below the surface of human nature as Burke's "Reflections," and is only less eloquent than that great work. "The Age of Reason" is scarcely more pungent and audacious, and Mackintosh's "Vindiciæ Gallicæ" is far less vigorous. From the point of view of immediate public benefit, it is a pity it was not printed and widely circulated as a counterblast, not only to Bishop Watson, but to Burke. What the effect upon Wordsworth's career of such an overt step would have been may be easily conjectured. The slow ripening of the next ten years would have been rendered impossible. He would have been hurried by the pressure of outside opinion into positions from which he could hardly have retired by the aid of reason and feeling alone. The violence of his passionate nature would have been let loose. His reserve would have been broken, his pride offended, his independence lost.

The letter begins with a bitter charge of apostasy; "the levelling prelate, Bishop of the Dissenters," has fallen into ignominy: "While, with a servility which has prejudiced many people against religion itself, the ministers of the Church of England have appeared as writers upon public measures only to be the advocates of slavery, civil and religious, your Lordship stood almost alone as the defender of truth and political charity." The young author avows that his own spirit will not meet with the Bishop's approval, "for it is a republican spirit." He confesses that he is little touched by the death of Louis XVI., of whose guilt he is fully persuaded. In stern and judicial terms, which contrast boldly with the misplaced pathos of Burke, he says: "At a period big with the fate of the human race

I am sorry that you attach so much importance to the personal sufferings of the late royal martyr, and that an anxiety for the issue of the present convulsions should not have prevented you from joining in the idle cry of modish lamentation which has resounded from the Court to the cottage." He himself regrets that sombre event only because it took place without regular legal process, and because the poor King, by the nature of his unnatural position above other men, had been "precluded from attaining even a moderate knowledge of common life, and from feeling a particular share in the interests of mankind. . . . Any other sorrow for the death of Louis is irrational and weak." He even excuses, or explains, the other executions which had shocked Watson, by asserting that Liberty is unfortunately "obliged to borrow the very arms of Despotism to overthrow him, and, in order to reign in peace, must establish herself by violence." "She deplores such stern necessity," he continues, in a sentence which might have been borrowed from Robespierre, "but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation."

He defends the appropriation of Church property by the French nation, charging the higher clergy with vice, jobbery, and hypocrisy. "Your sorrow," he says, "for these individuals will be diminished by recollecting the unworthy motives which induced the bulk of them to undertake the office, and the scandalous arts which enabled so many to attain the rank and enormous wealth which it has seemed necessary to annex to the charge of a Christian pastor." Then, beginning to argue on the main subject, the superiority of an equalitarian republic over a monarchy and a system of privilege, he indulges in much strong and sarcastic language. "Relying upon the temper of the times, you have surely thought little argument necessary to contest what few will be hardy enough to support; the strongest of auxiliaries, imprisonment and the pillory, has left your arm little to perform." Curiously modern is his exposition of the principles of the referendum, but his distrust of long terms of office brings us back to the

eighteenth century. He declares that the popular mind is being debauched in favour of the present policy of the British government. " Left to the quiet exercise of their own judgment, do you think that the people would have thought it necessary to set fire to the house of the philosophic Priestley, and to hunt down his life like that of a traitor or a parricide? that, deprived almost of the necessaries of existence by the burden of their taxes, they would cry out, as with one voice, for a war from which not a single ray of consolation can visit them to compensate for the additional keenness with which they are about to smart under the scourge of labour, of cold, and of hunger?" He attacks the British penal code, pleads in favour of giving much executive power to the legislature, condemns the hereditary principle, and, in a sentence which might be taken as a summary of Shakespeare's English history-plays, declares: " The office of kings is a trial to which human virtue is not equal." A legislator, he says, being aware " that the extremes of poverty and riches have a necessary tendency to corrupt the human heart, will banish from his code all laws such as the unnatural monster of primogeniture," and such as encourage associations against labour, and, indeed, all monopolies and distinctions unfavourable to the poor. He makes the very keen observation that law-makers " have unjustly left unprotected that most important part of property, not less real because it has no material existence, that which ought to enable the labourer to provide food for himself and his family." He calls for " wise and salutary regulations counteracting that inequality among mankind which proceeds from the present *fixed* disproportion of their possessions." He objects to nobility on several grounds, one of which is that " it has a necessary tendency to dishonour labour." He advocates manhood franchise, declaring that " if there is a single man in Great Britain who has no suffrage in the election of a representative, the will of the society of which he is a member is not generally expressed; he is a Helot in that society." He attacks Burke for endeavouring to

rivet the present to a dead past. He rallies the Bishop on having deserted the cause of parliamentary reform, and charges him in terrible indignation with having "no wish to dispel an infatuation which is now giving up to the sword so large a portion of the poor, and consigning the rest to the more slow and painful consumption of want." Finally he glories in the odium under which the friends of Liberty are labouring, and expresses sorrow that they can expect no aid from his lordship, their lost leader. The letter ends abruptly, in the middle of a sentence.

In trying to decide which of the two controversialists has the better of the argument, much will, of course, depend upon the reader's point of view. Watson's opinions are sober, not to say stale. They are those of a man who looks backward rather than forward. What has been and is, will probably continue. He is a pessimist when he regards human nature, an optimist when he estimates human institutions. Wordsworth, on the other hand, looks at things in precisely the opposite way. With him, as with all revolutionists, the salient and blessed fact in life is the possibility of indefinite progress. Light breaks upon him out of the future, and he turns his face cheerfully towards the light. In comparison with the infinite aptitudes of man, the pregnant powers of his divine nature, how fragmentary and imperfect are his laws, his social order, and all his works! There is nothing sacred about institutions except their value to living men; but man is sacred. It is absurd to trace this faith to Rousseau, as if it had never been held before he uttered it. No general advance in civilization has been made except in the strength it confers. It springs in every healthy young heart. And Wordsworth's noble pamphlet, in its buoyant eloquence, its fearless logic, its trust in the supremacy of goodness, is splendidly youthful. One would rather live in his ideal world than in the ideal world of his antagonist. And one would rather be the writer of his burning plea for a forlorn hope than the staid and disillusioned apologist of the British Constitu-

tion. Wordsworth never wrote anything more creditable to his heart, and, except Burke's "Reflections," the literature of the time furnished no other treatise at once so lively, so acute, and so profound.

Bishop Watson seems to have been incorrigible, and Wordsworth was not his last assailant. It was for writing and selling a reply to another of his pamphlets in defence of the government that Wakefield and Johnson were punished in 1798. And as war between France and England was declared in February, 1793, rational controversy became more and more difficult.

It is no wonder Wordsworth's family rejected him. To his uncles it was plain that he shared the views of infidels and traitors. Priestley, Price, and Paine, were the bugbears of "well-disposed" people, who then, as ever, made no mistake in associating orthodox standards of religion with safe and settled political principles. No historical work gives a strong enough description of the struggle then going on in England; but from the pages of reviews, such as *The Gentleman's Magazine*, it is possible to realize how wide apart the two sides were, and how extremely critical was the situation. The Revolutionists were able and active, though relatively not numerous, of course. Their opponents, with the example of France before their eyes, watched them at every turn. For instance, a quiet and reasonable letter in the Magazine on the subject of the low wages—one shilling a day—of agricultural labourers, was denounced by another correspondent as showing "a tendency, if not the design, to excite tumult and revolt." A third thereupon rejoined that writings whose purpose was "to demonstrate the duty of acquiescence and point out ideal sources of comfort to the poor have had an evident tendency to weaken the public compassion for their sufferings." A writer at Cambridge, after much vile detraction of Paine and injustice to Priestley, boasted that at any rate three-fourths of the students in the university were designed for the Church. What was perhaps regarded as the extreme of sedition was reached in "Lessons to a Young Prince," by David Williams,

who had been a friend of Benjamin Franklin, and was made a French citizen in 1792. To the Conservatives it seemed inopportune to the point of criminality that Godwin should write, in 1793: "Where anarchy has slain its hundreds, despotism has sacrificed millions upon millions." His pages on the unfair advantages conferred by wealth, marvels of condensed wisdom as they are, and cool in their expression, were considered peculiarly untimely, just because they were at the time peculiarly true. Poverty, he said, was a bar to good society and to advancement: "Does a man, whose exterior denotes indigence, expect to be well received in society, and especially by those who would be understood to dictate to the rest? . . . The lesson that is read to him is, Go home, enrich yourself by whatever means, obtain those superfluities which are alone regarded as estimable, and you may then be secure of an amiable reception." He was touching another sensitive spot when he wrote of universities: "Public education has always expended its energies in the support of prejudice; it teaches its pupils, not the fortitude that shall bring every proposition to the test of examination, but the art of vindicating such tenets as may chance to be previously established." Wordsworth's uncles may not have read the chapter "Of Religious Establishments" in "Political Justice," but they would know in any case on whom to fix the responsibility for his not taking orders. We must always remember that it was William Wordsworth who is reported to have said to a friend: "Throw aside your books of chemistry and read Godwin on Necessity!"*

* See Hazlitt's "Spirit of the Age."

CHAPTER X

PHILANTHROPIC PLANS

In October, 1793, while Wordsworth was still, so far as we know, a guest of Robert Jones, or exploring the Welsh mountains in his company, or possibly risking his neck in France, his poetical ventures were noticed in *The Monthly Review*. This was a London magazine of high standing. The criticism of "Descriptive Sketches" and "An Evening Walk" is a sample of the treatment their successors were to receive for many years to come, superficial and lofty, overlooking their serious import, and calling attention solely to novelties and oddities of diction and figure. It is smart and hard, in childish imitation of the worst qualities of Dr. Johnson. Coleridge had not yet come, Wordsworth himself had not yet come, to make criticism philosophical and to give it a soul. But perhaps it is expecting too much to demand that a couple of pages in a magazine should possess so much. They might at least, however, have been less perfunctory.

"More descriptive poetry!" runs the trivial strain. "Have we not yet enough? Must eternal changes be rung on uplands and lowlands, and nodding forests, and brooding clouds, and cells, and dells, and dingles? Yes; more, and yet more: so it is decreed. Mr. Wordsworth begins his descriptive sketches with the following exordium." Here the reviewer quotes the first twelve lines of the poem. "May we ask, how it is that rivers join the song of ev'n? or, in plain prose, the evening! but, if they do, is it not true that they equally join the song of morning, noon, and night? The *purple morning falling in flakes* of light is a bold figure: but we are told, it falls far and wide—Where?—On the mountain's *side*. We are sorry to see the purple morning confined

so like a maniac in a straight waistcoat. What the night of wing of silence is, we are unable to comprehend: but the climax of the passage is, that, were there such a spot of holy ground as is here so sublimely described, *unfound* by Pain and her sad family, Nature's God had surely given that spot to man, though its *woods* were *undiscovered*."

In the same fashion the reviewer tears up the next sixteen lines, and then complacently concludes: "How often shall we in vain advise those, who are so delighted with their own thoughts that they cannot forbear from putting them into rhyme, to examine those thoughts till they themselves understand them? No man will ever be a poet, till his mind be sufficiently powerful to sustain this labour." He has his fling also at "An Evening Walk," having taken the trouble to read the first four lines that met his eye. He ridicules the boldness of their imagery. Plainly, his standard of poetry is prose. "These are figures," he declares, "which no poetical licence can justify. If they can possibly give pleasure, it must be to readers whose habits of thinking are totally different from ours. Mr. Wordsworth is a scholar, and, no doubt, when reading the works of others, a critic. There are passages in his poems which display imagination, and which afford hope for the future; but, if he can divest himself of all partiality, and will critically question every line that he has written, he will find many which, he must allow, call loudly for amendment."

When we consider the intensity of feeling, the depth of experience, and the artistic toil, that went to the making of these two poems, we must realize that their young author, a lonely and homeless youth, read these stupid remarks with pain. He had not yet acquired, if he ever really did acquire, that indifference to published criticism of his works which he later professed. Of course, he perceived that the reviewer had not read more than the first page or two of either poem—in the case of "An Evening Walk" the page of Errata!—but no doubt he was hurt and disappointed. The worst of it was that he must already have begun the process of

self-criticism, and felt the unrealness of some of his figures. It is absurd to say, as has so often been said, that Wordsworth was incapable of judging his own work correctly. All of it received, or was allowed to retain, its present form only after much testing. If he sometimes, especially in the later years of his life, smoothed away rugged beauties, we should not let this blind us to the fact that the general result of his revision was to heighten and purify his imagery and to harmonize his music. He might well have left his earliest poems unrevised, because their interest is largely biographical; but no doubt the changes he introduced improved them as works of art. No young author could read such a notice of his first books without being deeply affected. The ruthless critic who hastily penned those flippant remarks about Wordsworth's poetic diction deflected the current of English literature. Clearly as the poet must have seen through his lazy trick, a thing said is a thing said, and his attention had been rudely drawn to a dangerous mannerism. He never again personified so freely, never again indulged so intemperately in " poetic licence."

It was this review to which his brother Christopher referred in his diary on November 5. The sage collegian, reflecting on the matter three days later, writes:

" No author ought, I think, without he enters the world with considerable advantages, to begin with publishing a very elaborate work; however, not a work upon which tastes may very considerably vary, *e.g.*, my Br.'s Poems. If *he* had had his reputation raised by some less important and more *popular* poem, it would have insured from petty critics a different reception to his Descriptive Sketches and An Evening Walk."

Very true! But how much less we love a young man for being so wise, and how unlike William this sounds! Their sister, we may remember, thought Kit " not so warm as William," but " much more likely to make his fortune." If the painful lesson proved in the end salutary to the poet, and hastened the simplification of his style, it was not because he sought popularity. In spite

of all his political interests, he was occupied chiefly in observing the world with a poet's eye and in training his powers of expression. The result is perceptible in "Guilt and Sorrow," a poem which dates chiefly from 1793 and 1794. Some of it—a part, that is, of the Female Vagrant's story—was composed at least two years earlier. The whole, which was completed before the close of 1794, although not published until 1842, seems not to have been much altered. "The Female Vagrant," corresponding to thirty of the seventy-four stanzas which the entire work contains, was published in "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798.

"Guilt and Sorrow" is in almost every respect a great advance over "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches." The poet turns from the description of nature, in which he had not excelled Thomson or equalled Cowper, and attempts the more difficult work of narration. The story is entirely of his own invention or discovery. It did not come to him recommended by tradition or romantic glamour. He increases the difficulty of telling it by employing the Spenserian stanza, thus multiplying rhymes and imposing on himself the task of keeping up the interest and movement of the whole tale while preserving the metrical unity of every nine lines. Notwithstanding his use of this highly artificial measure, whose associations suggest loose sentence-structure and the extreme of poetic licence, he has avoided both. The language is plain, the liberties taken are few and innocent, as compared with his previously published poems. The most noticeable improvement is in the diction. There are almost no inappropriate words, almost none of the terms exclusively employed in verse. It is very important to observe that, before he had ever seen Coleridge, conjointly with whom he formulated his theory of poetic diction, and from whom he received welcome encouragement, Wordsworth was already employing the language of everyday life in narrative poetry. Nor is there anything to indicate that he had in mind the examples of Cowper and Crabbe.

As might have been expected from the general direction of his thoughts, the poem deals with humble life. So, indeed, did the earlier ones, whenever human figures appeared in them; but here it is not healthy mountaineers and happy milkmaids, enlivening the scene in harmony with beautiful nature. We have, instead, the victims of social wrong, outcasts from the world, sunk in fortune below the level of contented poverty. Moreover, Wordsworth's immediate preoccupation with the political questions of the day gives the poem its aim and force. It is, in its way, as truly a tract for the times as his Reply to Bishop Watson. The ravages of war among the poor, raising prices, unsettling employment, causing the horrors of forced conscription, with the breaking up of families and impelling of innocent people towards legalized murder, are portrayed in a startling light. There is no relief, no suggestion that the glory of England or the elevation of great captains furnishes compensation for these wars. The evil is probed unflinchingly. It is not fair to say, as some have said, that the young poet hugged his grief because he had at this time an unwholesome fondness for melancholy. It rather seems that he wrote as he did for the noble reason that his mind was filled with sorrow for others, that he had no thought of self, that he was not blinded by false appearances of national splendour, and that he knew where to look for wider and vastly more important interests. Following the lead of his first biographer, students of his life have too generally spoken of the sombre mood out of which this poem grew as something to be regretted, or at least condoned. He never was more truly a poet in the sense of having a prophetic insight into the life of his times and marking out the course of progress, than when he perceived the need of equality and the absolutely unmitigated evil of war. It is to be noticed also that in this poem poor and uneducated persons are represented naturally. They are the objects neither of sentimental affectation nor of contemptuous caricature. They do not speak in dialect, but in plain English. Their emotions are not

represented as the peculiar passions of a class, but as human feelings. Above all, they preserve their dignity. Not their poverty and lack of education was what he saw in them, but qualities of mind and heart which are all the more admirable because they withstand every disadvantage. This remained Wordsworth's permanent attitude, and is throughout one of the great distinctions of his poetry.

Some of the incidents of "Guilt and Sorrow," particularly the story of the soldier's widow, had been narrated to him years before by a woman who had suffered as she suffers. The rest had suggested itself to him as he rambled over Salisbury Plain after separating from Calvert. The sight of Stonehenge had made him think of the horrors of war in pagan times, and reflect how awful they are still, and how they fall more upon the poor than upon others. A summary of the poem would fail to reproduce its intense earnestness, its simplicity, and tragic power. In execution no less than in design, it is immeasurably above the rank of *juvenilia* in which it was once classified, and its value is strikingly enhanced for him who reads it soon after reading the Reply to Bishop Watson. Two lines at least have become celebrated—those in which the unhappy woman, after losing her husband and children in America during the War of Independence, and returning to England in destitution, cries:

> And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,
> And near a thousand tables pined and wanted food.

The political situation in 1793 and 1794, because it was due to the conflict between two philosophies, which themselves grew out of two permanent aspects of human nature, continued to absorb Wordsworth's interest, preventing him from fixing himself in any profession. No similar crisis has affected England since,* and to find a parallel we must go back to the middle of the seventeenth century. Without some conception of its magnitude, we shall utterly fail to understand the course of

* This was written before August, 1914.

our poet's outer life, and still more the current of his deepest opinions and feelings. To perceive how intense was the passion, it is not enough to read the speeches of Pitt and Burke's "Reflections," with the replies made by their most eminent antagonists, by Fox and Sheridan, by Mackintosh and Erskine. It is not enough to study Godwin's "Political Justice" and Paine's "Rights of Man." It is necessary also to know how extensive was the small-fire amid the crash of this big artillery. The Press teemed with sermons and pamphlets for and against the French Revolution, the doctrine of innate rights, the theory of equality, the plea for a reform of the British Constitution. Several societies existed for propagating radical views, and at least one for combating them. The public ferment was widespread. A small but not inconsiderable number in England and Scotland persisted in demanding reforms in spite of the reflected odium cast upon all advocates of change by the unhappy condition of France. As is usually the case, this movement was confined almost entirely to the more enlightened class of artisans and to professional men—in other words, to persons who depended more than others upon their own faculties. They were for the most part Dissenters, and of course Whigs. The Whig party in the House of Commons was very small, seldom mustering on a division more than sixty votes. Fox and Sheridan, Whitbread, Grey, and Wilberforce, were among its most prominent leaders.

With the beginning of the Revolution in France had coincided a remarkable change in the position of Burke. When the army estimates were introduced in February, 1790, and their amount was objected to, notwithstanding the course of events abroad, he denounced the attitude of his friends Fox and Sheridan, saying that he "was sure some wicked persons had shown a strong disposition to recommend an imitation of the French spirit of reform." His dramatic break with both of these disciples presently succeeded this declaration. From that time forth every Whig Bill in Parliament, every speech by his old associates, and every petition

for reform laid before the House, was judged by him as proceeding in some way from this nefarious design. Attachment to established institutions became in him dread of change. Trust in experience was perverted into distrust of reason. His former disapproval of passion and prejudice changed suddenly into a belief that they were the necessary safeguards of national honour. He became the hero of reaction. Even his greatest admirers admit that the Revolution was henceforth a subject which he could not discuss without losing his sense of proportion. In November, 1790, the torrent of his eloquence, compounded of argument and feeling, poured itself forth in his famous book, "Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings of Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event." The immediate cause of his alarm was a sermon preached, November 4, 1789, by the Rev. Dr. Price, a well-known Unitarian minister, before the Revolution Society. This company had been formed very many years before to celebrate at an annual banquet the "glorious Revolution" of 1688; but it seems that its members were sufficiently receptive to revolutionary ideas in general to lend a willing ear to Dr. Price when he proclaimed that the insurrection in France was in accordance with principles which had always been sacred to the lovers of progress in England.

"After sharing," he cried, "in the benefits of one revolution, I have been spared to be a witness to two other revolutions, both glorious; and now, methinks, I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading, and a general amendment beginning in human affairs—the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience."

Another body of men, the Society for Constitutional Information, founded in 1780, was precisely what its name indicates. It distributed political tracts for the education of middle-class people. In March, 1791, it was resolved by this society to thank one of their members, Thomas Paine, for his services in writing "The

Rights of Man: an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution." This was only the First Part of that work. It was published very soon after Burke's "Reflections," and is more temperate than the Second Part, which appeared in 1792, and led to its author's expulsion from England. No English book of that period has been so generally denounced as dangerous to society as "The Rights of Man." Fox was careful to deny in the House of Commons that he had ever read it. To approve its principles or to associate with its author was enough to ruin any man's reputation for patriotism and morality. Yet a candid examination of it at the present day discloses very little that warrants reprobation, unless it be a too vivacious and vituperative style, and disregard for the prejudices of an antagonist. And these faults, raised to Olympian magnificence, are equally present in Burke, with whom they are all the more reprehensible, because the objects of his scorn were unpopular and weak. Paine openly attacked the hereditary principle. This was the root of his offence. He was known also to have sided with the Americans in their war for independence, and to have been elected a citizen of France, and even a delegate to the French Convention.

Another association, the London Corresponding Society, was started by Thomas Hardy, a Scottish shoemaker, in January, 1792. Its object was to correspond with other bodies that desired to effect a reform in the franchise. As was natural, the discussion of this topic led to others more general, and the example of France was frequently cited. Branch societies were established in London and elsewhere, until Hardy, in the autumn, estimated the membership at more than twenty thousand. Burke at one time declared in the House of Commons that there were thirty Revolutionary clubs in London alone, one of them with six hundred members. Allowance must be made for Hardy's sanguine temperament and for Burke's anger and panic. Another group of clubs sprang up in the same year, originating in the Society of the Friends of the People, which contained a

number of wealthy and influential men, and was countenanced by members of Parliament. Paine found in all these organizations good machinery for distributing his books. From the profits of "The Rights of Man" he offered one thousand pounds to the Society for Constitutional Information. The Second Part contained, as its most alarming statement, the following words:

"All hereditary government is in its nature tyranny. A heritable crown, or a heritable throne, or by what other fanciful name such things may be called, has no other significant explanation than that mankind are hereditable property. To inherit a government is to inherit the people, as if they were flocks and herds."

This is a good example of Paine's manner of stating a paradox as if it were a platitude. There is *un quelque chose de trop* in all he says, which stimulates or irritates according to the reader's prepossessions. Again, in the same specious way, he declares: "Government has of itself no rights; they are altogether duties." But side by side with overstatements and novelties insinuated under the guise of commonplace, are many truths which other men had not the courage or the ability to express.

In the autumn of 1792 both the Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information sent congratulatory addresses to the French National Convention. The language of these effusions provokes a smile, but they were prompted by generosity:

"The sparks of liberty preserved in England for ages, like the coruscations of the northern Aurora, served but to show the darkness visible in the rest of Europe. The lustre of the American Republic, like an effulgent morning, arose with increasing vigour, but still too distant to enlighten our hemisphere till the splendour of the French Revolution burst upon the nations in the full fervour of a meridian sun, and displayed in the midst of the European world the practical result of principles which philosophy had sought in the shade of speculation, and which experience must everywhere confirm."

But in a postscript it is modestly stated in ordinary English that the Society for Constitutional Information in London has sent to the soldiers of liberty a thousand pairs of shoes, and will continue sending a thousand pairs a week for at least six weeks. The reply of the French made trouble for their friends. It contained one phrase which especially excited public alarm: "The moment cannot be distant when the people of France will offer their congratulations to a National Convention in England."

This affair, coming close upon the unhappy events of that autumn in France, unloosed the tempest. Public alarm and indignation ran high. An Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers was formed by John Reeves, ex-Chief-Justice of Newfoundland, who had returned to England in October. It encouraged the prosecution of publishers and vendors of seditious tracts, books, and newspapers. It printed and distributed incendiary charges against those who sympathized with the French or dared to advocate parliamentary reforms. It scattered broadcast the most platitudinous panegyrics on the British Constitution. It pointed out the connection between Whiggery and irreligion, and declared the Church in danger. Arrests for uttering seditious words were not infrequent in 1792; they multiplied next year. John Frost, for declaring he was for equality and no kings, and the Rev. William Winterbotham, of Plymouth, for saying in a sermon that "His Majesty was placed on the throne on condition of keeping certain laws and rules," were convicted and heavily punished, the former in spite of a superb defence by Thomas Erskine. This great advocate secured the acquittal of his next clients, Perry and Lambert, the editor and the printer of *The Morning Chronicle*, in the first trial under the Libel Act. Some of the judgments were barbarously severe. Winterbotham was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in Newgate, and Daniel Holt, a Nottingham printer, for the mild offence of "republishing verbatim a political tract originally circulated by the Thatched-House Tavern

Association, of which Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Richmond were members," was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.*

An effort was made by some of the radical societies in 1793 to hold a National Convention of delegates. It was not until late in November that this plan partially succeeded. Delegates from forty-five Scottish and four English societies met in Edinburgh, but after a few sittings they were dispersed. William Skirving, secretary of the convention, and Margarot and Gerrald, delegates from London, were arrested, tried, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. The Scottish judges had already given the same severe sentence to Thomas Muir, who had founded a Revolutionary society in Glasgow, and one of seven years to the Rev. Thomas Fyshe Palmer for establishing another in Dundee. The Lord Justice Clerk, or Attorney for the Crown, at Muir's trial, stated the Tory view in plain terms when he told the jury: "The Government in this country is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented. As for rabble, who have nothing but personal property, what hold has the nation of them?" As at all the other trials for sedition, great stress was laid upon the danger of free speech at that particular time, when the country was unsettled and the example of France was awakening false hopes in the minds of poor and ignorant people. The usual boast was made that "the British Constitution is the best that ever was since the creation of the world, and it is not possible to make it better."

Three elements were mingled in the public panic, as doubtless they were also mingled in the efforts of "seditious persons." These were political theory, economic theory, and religious belief. Sympathy with France was considered to imply disloyalty, a levelling tendency, and infidelity to the Christian religion. From Burke himself down to the lowest informer this view was held or professed by nearly all the friends of King,

* Belsham, "Memoirs of the Reign of George the Third," Vol. IV., p. 436.

Property, and Church. "The property of France does not govern it," was said by Burke in condemnation of that country.

"The body of the people," he declared, "must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds. They must respect that property of which they must not partake. They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavour, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. Of this consolation whoever deprives them deadens their industry and strikes at the root of all acquisition, as of all consolation."

Whether this discouraging conclusion, to which his attachment to established order brought even so humane a man as Burke, be necessary or not, we can be sure that the young author of "Guilt and Sorrow" must have read it with vehement disapproval. Fortunately, he had gone too far to be caught by the inhuman and blasphemous use of theology in support of oppressive institutions implied in this reference to "eternal justice."

It seemed futile for the friends of any reform to struggle against a public alarmed by fears of plots, or against a majority in Parliament who were more or less eager for war. Fox's motion for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, imposing political and social disabilities on Dissenters, was lost in 1790, and the number of his supporters fell from 105 on that occasion, to 63 when he brought in a similar measure two years later. Pitt and Burke, who had once been friends of electoral reform, now thought such subjects inopportune. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. Barracks were erected all over the country. Spies and informers were employed by Government. The army and navy were enormously increased. Prices went up. Poverty and unemployment were appalling. The only gleam of comfort was the abolition of the slave-trade, which was at length carried by Wilberforce, Fox, and their friends, against stolid opposition. Speakers and writers on the

Tory side, and advocates in courts of law, openly professed that the British Constitution did not admit of representative government, and that men of wealth alone should have the suffrage.*

To anticipate a little, the suspicion of Government and the panic of the great majority of the people in England and Scotland resulted at last in the arraignment, on the charge of high-treason, of Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, a preacher and politician, Thomas Holcroft, a dramatist, John Thelwall, a professional agitator, and five other persons. Their cases were practically disposed of with the acquittal of Hardy on November 5, 1794, and of Horne Tooke shortly afterwards. The prisoners were defended by Thomas Erskine, whose speeches did much to counteract the alarmist tendencies fostered by those who favoured the war. The strength of the opposition was shown to be much greater than men supposed, by the widespread sympathy manifested for the prisoners, and by the vast crowds that welcomed them on their release. There can be no doubt now that a very considerable number of British subjects were on their side, ranging all the way from extreme revolutionists to moderate reformers, and it is evident that the opinions of this body cannot justly be all traced to Thomas Paine and Rousseau. They were much too diversified, and many of them too natural and inevitable, to be thus narrowed down. Some of them, indeed, flow, and have always flowed, as an undercurrent, among the less happy and privileged elements of every community, or among its most enlightened members. History tends to overlook or misjudge movements which do not appear to have a successful issue, but minority reports often represent views the most just and the most brave. The trials of Hardy, Horne Tooke, Thelwall, and their fellows, were the culminating point of the anti-Jacobin panic. Holcroft, as we shall see, became soon afterwards, if indeed he was not at that time, an acquaintance of Wordsworth and Cole-

* See the Attorney-General's speech on the trial of Thomas Hardy, and the Chief Justice Clerk's summary on the trial of Thomas Muir.

ridge, and with Thelwall they were later on terms of considerable intimacy.*

Meanwhile, it appears that lack of means prevented Wordsworth from returning to the intellectual excitement of London, and lack of an invitation kept him away from Forncett. Little is known of his doings between Dorothy's letter of August 30,† in which she writes that he is in Wales with Robert Jones, and his letter to William Mathews,‡ which is dated February 17 [1794]. In this he gives his address as "Mr. Rawson's, Mill-house, near Halifax." From his remark, "I quitted Keswick some time since, and have been moving backwards and forwards," we may perhaps infer that he visited Calvert, who lived in that neighbourhood; and from a letter of his sister's we learn that he stayed at Armathwaite, the house of the father of his friend

* The public ferment is indicated even more by the swarm of publications on fundamental questions than by the debates in Parliament or the famous State trials of 1793 and 1794. For example, the same number of *The Monthly Review* that contains the notice of Wordsworth's volumes of poetry comments on no less than twenty-five books, pamphlets, and printed sermons, all bearing on the supreme crisis. We find among them "Addresses" to Burke, to Fox, to Pitt; a "Poetical Epistle to Fox"; the "Speeches of Pitt and of Fox"; "Letters on the Impolicy of a Standing Army in Time of Peace and on the Unconstitutional and Illegal Measure of Barracks"; "A Word to the Wise, to Check, if Possible, the Dread Waste of War and Produce Dignified Self-Reform"; "The True Briton's Catechism . . . Interspersed with Occasional Strictures on Seditious and Democratic Writers"; "Reason Urged against Precedent"; "A Letter to John Frost, a Prisoner in Newgate"; "A Brief Review of Parliamentary Reformation"; "The Present Alarming Crisis"; "Examination of the Principles of Thomas Erskine"; "Benjamin Franklin's Rules for Reducing a Great Empire to a Small One"; and "Knaves-Acre Association," an attack on Justice Reeves's society. There are several French publications and translations from the French, among them "Letters on the Confessions of J. J. Rousseau," and an "Authentic Copy of the New Constitution of France." The clergy of the Church of England were not silent, neither were the Unitarian and other Dissenting ministers. The most significant of the books from these two quarters reviewed in the October number was "Observations on the Four Gospels," advocating "a plain, consistent, rational system of religion, whose basis is morality." In subsequent numbers even more attention is paid to the works of controversy on both sides of the great threefold question—constitutional, social, and religious.

† In the collection of Mr. Marshall.

‡ "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 57.

Spedding, about a mile north of Keswick. "I am now staying," he says, "with a gentleman who married a relation of mine [his cousin, Miss Threlkeld], with whom my sister was brought up." And then follows the momentous statement which marks an epoch in his life and Dorothy's, the beginning of many happy years: "My sister is under the same roof with me, and, indeed, it was to see her that I came into this country." The hope long deferred had been realized at last. Their meeting at Halifax had been like the objective of a long campaign. How many plans, how many sacrifices, how many delays, had preceded this reunion! Three long years had passed since their last meeting, in the Christmas holidays of 1790-91. His only home was in her heart. Travel, independence, battling with the strong and dangerous currents of the world's life, had left him unsatisfied. Her faithful soul had been kept alive chiefly by hope that this day might come. Her quick apprehension, her genius for observing nature and the little events of life, her rare fidelity of expression, these qualities in which she was surpassed by no woman of her time, wanted purpose and outlet until then; and it is plain that, although he might have deepened the line he had already chosen and become a great reflective poet, a master of earnest satire, he would never, without the daily companionship of his sister, have found that "joy in widest commonalty spread" which is the life-blood of his poetry. They were never again separated for more than a few weeks at a time until his death.

But though this great step towards a settlement had been taken, Wordsworth was still far from having found a means of livelihood. "I have done nothing," he writes, "and still continue to do nothing. What is to become of me I know not. I cannot bow down my mind to take orders; and as for the law, I have neither strength of mind, purse, or constitution, to engage in that pursuit." He renounces the idea of taking his Master of Arts degree, as being too expensive. He inquires of Mathews, who is travelling in Mediterranean countries, whether "the principles of free government

have any advocates in Portugal; or is Liberty a sound, of which they have never heard?" He says he has read no Spanish for three years, and little Italian, but of French he esteems himself a tolerable master. "My Italian studies," he says, "I am going to resume immediately, as it is my intention to instruct my sister in that language."

Richard Wordsworth, their father's elder brother, was collector of the port of Whitehaven, and thither, after a long visit together near Halifax, the happy pair departed by coach. The distance is about one hundred miles. How long they remained there is not known, but it appears that William Calvert offered them rooms in a farmhouse, called Windy Brow, belonging to him, near Keswick. It stood on the southern side of Latrigg, a steep hill that rises from the River Greta, and commanded a comprehensive view of Derwentwater and the mountains that encircle both lake and town. They entered the district by way of Kendal.

"I walked," writes Dorothy triumphantly,* "with my brother at my side, from Kendal to Grasmere, eighteen miles, and afterwards from Grasmere to Keswick, fifteen miles, through the most delightful country that was ever seen. We are now at a farm-house, about half a mile from Keswick. When I came, I intended to stay only a few days; but the country is so delightful, and, above all, I have so full an enjoyment of my brother's company, that I have determined to stay a few weeks longer. After I leave Windy Brow, I shall proceed to Whitehaven."

In an undated letter to Miss Pollard,† she dilates on the beauty of the landscape and the good manners and good sense of the tenant-farming family that occupied Windy Brow. She still exults in her new-found freedom, and is determined it shall last as long as possible:

"You would hear from my aunt of my wonderful powers in the way of walking, and of my safe arrival at Grasmere. At Keswick I still remain. I have been so much delighted with the people of this house, with its

* "Memoirs," I. 83. † In Mr. Marshall's collection.

situation, with the cheapness of living, and above all with the opportunity which I have of enjoying my brother's company, that, although on my arrival I only talked of staying a few days, I have already been here above a fortnight, and intend staying still a few weeks longer, perhaps three or four. . . . We have a neat parlour to ourselves, which Mr. Calvert has fitted up for his own use, and the lodging-rooms are very comfortable. Till my brother gets some employment he will lodge here. Mr. Calvert is not now at Windy Brow, as you will suppose. We please ourselves in calculating from our present expenses for how very small a sum we could live. We find our own food. Our breakfast and supper are of milk, and our dinner chiefly of potatoes, and we drink no tea."

But her grand-aunt Crackanthorpe, of Newbiggin, had views of her own, which were also the views of the world, or the elderly and respectable part of the world, as to the propriety of living gipsy-fashion. Long walks, indeed, and spending several weeks in a farmhouse belonging to the young and wealthy Mr. Calvert! She communicated these ideas, and apparently in rather pungent terms, to her niece, counting perhaps on the submissiveness which had perforce been shown hitherto by that young lady. But the same spirit that prompted the Reply to Bishop Watson flames up in Dorothy's answer of April 21, 1794, and it is quite likely that her independence was charged against the French or Tom Paine and the Americans. She takes refuge proudly under the shadow of her brother's name:*

"I affirm that I consider the character and virtues of my brother as sufficient protection; and besides I am convinced that there is no place in the world in which a good and virtuous young woman would be more likely to continue good and virtuous than under the roof of these honest, worthy, uncorrupted people: so that any guardianship beyond theirs I should think altogether unnecessary. I cannot pass unnoticed that part of your letter in which you speak of my 'rambling about the country on foot.' So far from considering this as a matter of condemnation, I rather thought it would have

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 62.

given my friends pleasure to hear that I had courage to make use of the strength with which nature has endowed me, when it not only procured me infinitely more pleasure than I should have received from sitting in a post chaise, but was also the means of saving me at least thirty shillings."

She mentions as her greatest inducement the society of her brother:

"I am now twenty-two years of age, and such have been the circumstances of my life that I may be said to have enjoyed his company only for a very few months. An opportunity now presents itself of obtaining this satisfaction, an opportunity which I could not see pass from me without unspeakable pain. I have regained all the knowledge I had of the French language some years ago, and have added considerably to it. I have now begun Italian, of which I expect to have soon gained a sufficient knowledge to receive much entertainment and advantage from it."

She accepts the invitation of her aunt and uncle to visit them on her return from Whitehaven.

The beautiful poem "Louisa" and the lines "To a Young Lady who had been Reproached for taking Long Walks in the Country" may well have been composed at this time, and the latter in consequence of Mrs. Crackanthorpe's admonition. It is well known that Wordsworth in a number of poems addressed his sister under other names than her own. "Dear Child of Nature, let them rail!" is appropriate to her and to the occasion. Later, when she was definitely settled in life with him, there could have been no one who would feel authorized to "reproach" her. Wordsworth, in extreme old age, gave an inconsistent account of the dates of both poems, attributing them to 1803 and to 1805, and saying that they were "composed at the same time and on the same view." Yet the second of them was printed in *The Morning Post* newspaper on February 12, 1802. Moreover, the expression "Lapland night" is one which he used in a letter in 1791. The internal connection between the two poems was once closer than

it now appears to be. When "Louisa" was first printed, in the edition of 1807, it began:

> Though by a sickly taste betrayed,
> Some will dispraise the lovely Maid,
> With fearless pride I say;

and this reading reappeared in the edition of 1845. One is almost persuaded that this was an allusion to Mrs. Crackanthorpe's sense of propriety. All other editions give a very different reading. Curiously enough, the peculiar form of stanza used in these two poems is the same as that of "Three years she grew in sun and shower"; and what was printed as the second stanza of "Louisa," in the editions from 1807 to 1843, looks as if it had originally belonged to this lovely nameless piece, which the poet printed as having been composed in the Harz Forest in 1799. It reads:

> And she hath smiles to earth unknown;
> Smiles that with motion of their own
> Do spread, and sink, and rise;
> That come and go with endless play,
> And ever, as they pass away,
> Are hidden in her eyes.

It is a metre the poet rarely used. One stanza of his translation of the Vicomte de Ségur's French Verses, 1795, the pieces mentioned, "Ruth," 1799, one stanza of "The Waterfall and the Eglantine," 1800, and six other poems scattered along between 1814 and 1831, are the only instances. All these facts incline me to think that the verses "Louisa" and "To a Young Lady" were composed long before 1802. Whether they affect the date and subject of "Three years she grew" is another matter.

Four long letters from Wordsworth in the North to William Mathews in London, written at long intervals between May 23, 1794, and January 10, 1795, present him in a new and rather surprising light.* To no other correspondent, so far as we know, did he ever write with

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 65, 69, 77, and 81. I have not seen the originals.

so little reserve. The subject this time is a plan of editing a magazine in the Metropolis, or, in case that cannot be done, of finding a place on some newspaper. He is afraid of venturing to London, on account of the expense. He thinks of remaining in the North and sending his contributions by post. Mathews and another young man are to attend to the business in town. Wordsworth himself, and Mathews, too, as he supposes, are too poor to advance any money towards carrying out the scheme, but perhaps this might be got over, he boyishly says, if they could be sure of the patronage of the public. He wishes Mathews distinctly to understand what his political sentiments are, as the plan cannot proceed unless the editors agree on this subject. In such a work as they have in mind, "it will be impossible not to inculcate principles of government and forms of social order of one kind or another." His confession of political faith is brief and unequivocal:

"I solemnly affirm that in no writings of mine will I ever admit of any sentiment which can have the least tendency to induce my readers to suppose that the doctrines which are now enforced by banishment, imprisonment, etc., etc., are other than pregnant with every species of misery. You know perhaps already that I am of that odious class of men called democrats, and of that class I shall for ever continue."

He proposes to contribute essays on Morals and Politics, besides critical remarks upon Poetry, Painting, Gardening, "and other subjects of amusement." He declares that all the periodicals with which he is acquainted, except one or two, "appear to be written to maintain the existence of prejudice and to disseminate error," and to such purposes he will not prostitute his pen. He has plenty of leisure, and is only correcting and adding to his published poems, which he had "huddled up" and sent imperfect into the world with great reluctance.

"But," he continues, "as I had done nothing by which to distinguish myself at the University, I thought these little things might show that I could do something.

They have been treated with unmerited contempt by some of the periodical publications, and others have spoken in higher terms of them than they deserve. I have another poem, written last summer, ready for the press, though I certainly should not publish it unless I hoped to derive from it some pecuniary recompense."

And he begs Mathews to look in at Johnson's, the publisher's, " and ask him if he ever sells any of those poems."

Writing again from Whitehaven in June, he says he has read with great pleasure the explicit avowal of Mathews's " political sentiments," and in return will set forth his own in more detail.

" I disapprove," he declares, " of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement: hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution."

Two causes are at work, he says, subverting the Constitution: first, the bad conduct of men in power; and second, " the changes of opinion respecting matters of government which within these few years have rapidly taken place in the minds of speculative men." To hasten these changes, he says, " I would give every additional energy in my power," though he adds: " I recoil from the bare idea of a Revolution." Then, as if to give Mathews a specimen of what the country editor of the proposed magazine was capable of, he rises heavily to a flight of eloquence in a manner already long out of fashion. There is a magisterial air in all Wordsworth's prose, except his shortest and most familiar letters. On more than one occasion the style attains real majesty. On many others, we must confess, it is affectedly pompous, owing very likely to the fact that he was imitating Milton and other seventeenth-century controversialists. His political programme is vague. He has hardly got beyond sentiment and declamation. He mentions no definite reform which he wishes to see established, except granting complete liberty of the Press.

"On this subject," he concludes, "I think I have said enough, if it be not necessary to add that, when I observe the people should be enlightened upon the subject of politics, I severely condemn all inflammatory addresses to the passions of men, even when it is intended to direct those passions to a good purpose. I know that the multitude walk in darkness. I would put into each man's hand a lantern to guide him, and not have him set out upon his journey depending for illumination on abortive flashes of lightning or the coruscations of transitory meteors."

From this dizzy height the young enthusiast descends to particulars. He proposes as the name of their periodical, *The Philanthropist, a Monthly Miscellany*, gravely remarking: "This title, I think, would be noticed. It includes everything that can instruct and amuse mankind." He goes on buoyantly to sketch the several departments of the magazine, insisting that the pages allotted to verse should be filled from new poetical publications of merit, and such old ones as are not generally known. As to subscribers, he expresses himself hopefully, but warns Mathews that "amongst the partisans of this war and of the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, amongst the mighty class of selfish alarmists," they would find no friends. "We must then look for protection entirely amongst the dispassionate advocates of liberty and discussion." The clergy, he is sure, will turn from them. But from young men at the universities, from Dissenters, and perhaps in Ireland, they will receive support. As to money, he has not a single sixpence to advance, and he must remain in the country. A friend, he says, has offered him a share of his income, which puts him under the obligation of trying to be of some little service to his fellow-men. We infer that he means to perform this service by writing poetry, and it was indeed well for him and for his fellow-men to all time that he did not plunge into the soul-consuming trade of journalism. It is interesting, however, that he thought seriously of doing so, and under all his odd verbiage one may easily perceive a brave and enterprising spirit. Boyish zest and manly foresight here

meet and mingle strangely. He begs Mathews to answer him "as soon as possible, and at great length." His own letter covers nearly eight printed pages, and ends with the stately assurance: "I am, with great respect and esteem, your fellow-labourer and friend, W. WORDSWORTH."

After such a bold challenge, it is amusing to turn to Wordsworth's letter to Mathews, headed Keswick, November 7, 1794, and read: "The more nearly we approached the time fixed for action, the more strongly was I persuaded that we should decline the field. I was not, therefore, either much surprised or mortified at the contents of your letter." The scheme has been abandoned, and Mathews has taken a position on some London newspaper. Wordsworth wants to know what it is like, with the idea of seeking a similar post. "I begin to wish much to be in Town," he says, and adds very sensibly, "Cataracts and mountains are good occasional society, but they will not do for constant companions." In January, 1795, he takes up again the topic of journalism in London, admitting his total ignorance of what qualifications are required. He is sure he could not make a good parliamentary reporter, having neither strength of memory, quickness of penmanship, nor rapidity of composition, and being subject to violent headaches.

"One thing, however, I can boast," he says, "and on that one thing I rely, extreme frugality. . . . You say a newspaper would be glad of me; do you think you could insure me employment in that way on terms similar to your own? I mean also in an opposition paper, for really I cannot, in conscience and in principle, abet in the smallest degree the measures pursued by the present Ministry."

A little light from another quarter is thrown upon these journalistic projects by a passage in Charles Mathews's "Memoirs." He tells us that his brother added to the income allowed him by his father by contributing to *The Oracle* and *The World*, and for a time was parliamentary reporter to these and other news-

papers. Boaden, the enthusiastic admirer and subsequently the biographer of the Kembles, edited *The Oracle*, and Charles Mathews himself was for a little while editor of *The Thespian*, a periodical entirely devoted to the drama.

It is a pity that so little is known about one who evidently was Wordsworth's most intimate friend at this interesting period of his life. Inference based upon only one side of their correspondence enables one to assert, with considerable confidence, that Mathews was a rebel against religious authority, and that community of feeling on this subject was one of the bonds between the young men. They had been contemporaries at Cambridge, they saw something of each other afterwards in London, they both refused to obey the wishes of their families and study for the ministry. A letter from Mathews to his brother, dated Barbados, June 5, 1801, confirms the conjecture that religious independence was a very serious concern with him. He writes:*

"Hitherto ill-fortune has pursued me in every shape; but I hope that her persecution is nearly over; and I trust that hereafter I shall be enabled to spend a tranquil life in the society of my friends in England in ease and affluence. Whatever may be my fate, I shall still have the consolation of having exerted myself, and of having acquired in every situation the esteem of men of sense and worth. . . . Tell Eliza [his brother's wife] from me that I sincerely wish her well in body and mind; but that to secure the latter from disease she must carefully watch that the seeds of superstition, which some one has plentifully sown in her heart, do not bring forth the fruit it generally does, illiberality of sentiment and that worst of all fiends, religious bigotry. The whole history of mankind is but a relation of the fatal and mischievous effects of this diabolical tyrant who has uniformly preyed upon the enlightened few that have dared to lift up their heads against the oppressor of their afflicted brethren, and has gnawed the very vitals of social existence. There is no part of the globe that is not even now groaning beneath her baneful pressure; and whatever form she assumes, she still arrogates to

* "Memoirs of Charles Mathews."

herself the claim of infallibility, and her votaries, of whatever sect they may be, damn by wholesale all the rest of the world. A freedom from superstition is the first blessing we can enjoy. Religion in some shape seems necessary to political existence. The wise man laughs at the follies of the vulgar, and in the pure contemplation of a benevolent Author of all Beings finds that happiness which others in vain look for amid the load of trumpery and ceremonies with which they think the Creator is gratified. If He can be gratified by an exertion of feeble mortals, it must be when they imitate His perfection by mutual benevolence and kindness. That you may long enjoy these blessings is the sincere prayer of your brother and friend, W. MATHEWS."

Whereupon Charles Mathews's second wife, who edited his " Memoirs," comments as follows:

" With the above remarks the writer's early experience had something to do; and his feelings naturally took alarm at a mistaken tendency, evident to all who knew the amiable person to whom he alludes. Mr. William Mathews had in his boyhood felt the gloom and rigours of fanaticism beneath his father's roof, where he had ceased to reside for some years, although he frequently visited it, and was on the most affectionate terms with all his family, who might be said to idolize him. But in these visits he resisted with all the energies of his strong mind every after-association with the ignorant and illiberal portion of his father's ' brethren.' "

Meanwhile—to be as vague as possible, for the exact time is not known—Wordsworth had found means of being directly serviceable to a fellow-being, and was faithfully performing his duty. His friend William Calvert and a younger brother, Raisley, were sons of the steward of the Duke of Norfolk, who owned a large estate at Greystoke, four miles from Penrith. They had considerable independent means. William, as we have seen, owned Windy Brow. It was evidently one of these brothers, probably the younger, who offered Wordsworth a share of his income to enable him to preserve his independence and write poetry. Raisley was dying of consumption, and Wordsworth remained

with him to comfort and entertain him, probably all through the summer and autumn of 1794. On October 1 he wrote to William Calvert from Keswick, suggesting that by a little economy the latter might help Raisley to go to Lisbon for his health, and offering to accompany him.

" Reflecting," he says, " that his return is uncertain, your brother requests me to inform you that he has drawn out his will, which he means to get executed in London. The purport of his will is to leave you all his property, real and personal, chargeable with a legacy of £600 to me, in case that on inquiry into the state of our affairs in London he should think it advisable to do so. It is at my request that this information is communicated to you, and I have no doubt but that you will do both him and myself the justice to hear this mark of his approbation without your good opinion of either of us being at all diminished by it."

It would appear that inquiry into the affairs of the Wordsworth heirs showed that their lawsuit against the Earl of Lonsdale was going badly; for Raisley Calvert, who died at Penrith early in 1795, left Wordsworth £900.*

This legacy from a young man who judged highly of Wordsworth's poetical powers must not only have released him from the fear of want, but have made him renew his dedication to that art which thus far had proved almost too stubborn for him. In a letter to Mathews, written just before this event, Wordsworth admits that, although he had had sufficient time on his hands to write a folio volume, he had been undergoing

* Mr. Gordon Wordsworth informs me that on visiting Greystoke Church he found that, according to the records, Raisley Calvert was buried there January 12, 1795. This being the case, Letter XXXIX., beginning on p. 84 of Vol. I. of Professor Knight's collection, is evidently not correctly dated. I would suggest that the date was not January 27, 1795, but December 27, 1794; that Letter XXXVIII. is a part of the same letter; and that the whole was posted January 10, perhaps the very day of Calvert's death. Letter XXXIX. would thus be a postscript to No. XXXVIII., added on January 7 at Penrith. The acquittals of Hardy (November 5) and Horne Tooke (November 22) are mentioned in No. XXXVIII. with rejoicing.

much uneasiness of mind. "My poor friend," he says, "is barely alive . . . but he may linger on for some days." Politics and the success of Mathews's newspaper appear to have been his only other interests. His sister had been obliged to leave him and return to Halifax. But for the dying gift of Raisley Calvert, bestowed with so much insight, the cottage they dreamed of might have been still a dream for many years. Without some degree of independence and without the constant society of Dorothy, the years of fruitfulness could not have come for Wordsworth. The £900 made an immense difference in his prospects, and we may well believe that his hope of writing poetry revived in him at once. The money meant even more to his sister than to him. Before the summer of 1795 was over, their plans were made. In September she was still at Millhouse, near Halifax. Where and how her brother spent his time after the death of Raisley Calvert, there is very little to show. I believe he returned to London and remained there trying in vain to write. In her letter of September 2, 1795, to Jane Pollard, who by this time had become Mrs. Marshall, Miss Wordsworth, referring to her brother, says: "Living in the unsettled way in which he has hitherto lived in London is altogether unfavourable to mental exertion."

CHAPTER XI

THE GODWIN CIRCLE

FROM January to September, 1795, Wordsworth is as completely lost to sight as if he had been locked up in Newgate or had returned to France. There is a gap of sixteen months in the published letters of his sister, and of nearly eleven months in his own. This is very strange, for not only had he a large family connection of educated persons, and not only was he already the author of two volumes of verse, but his character was energetic, and his ambitions inclined him towards public life. Yet in passing over this period, almost all that his first biographer remarks is:

"He had a good deal of Stoical pride, mingled with not a little Pelagian self-confidence. Having an inadequate perception of the necessity of divine grace, he placed his hopes where they could not stand; and did not place them where, if placed, they could not fall. He sought for ideal perfectibility where he could not but meet with real frailty, and did not look for peace where alone it could be found."

It is not known where he was or how employed outwardly. But one may safely infer something of his mood and the direction of his thoughts during those veiled months. For when he reappears there is a new firmness in his tone, as of one who has made renunciations, and thereby taken a step towards finding himself. He is confirmed in his disapproval of the war, and his feelings now seem more solidly based on philosophical principles. Sufficient proof of this assertion will be found in "The Borderers," composed in 1795-96, the thirteenth book of "The Prelude," and his letters to

Francis Wrangham and Mathews immediately after the long silence. Furthermore, in the "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree" there is heard a note which is quite rare in Wordsworth's poetry, a note of personal resentment for the world's neglect, its failure to appreciate him and his ideals. Although he told Miss Fenwick that they were composed in part at school at Hawkshead, it is impossible to believe that their actual turn, their indwelling sentiment, and their best qualities, can be traced farther back than 1795. In no other of his early poems do we find a line so characteristic of Wordsworth in his maturity, so certainly indicative of great poetic genius, as the last of these three:

> Yet, if the wind breathe soft, the curling waves,
> That break against the shore, shall lull thy mind
> By one soft impulse saved from vacancy.

None of his poems written before 1795 contains a line equal in magical felicity to

> The stone-chat, or the glancing sand-piper.

To have uttered that particular combination of sounds was to have made a fresh advance in English versification, although, strange to say, Wordsworth changed it in the edition of 1815, thereby drawing a protest from Charles Lamb. The passage of this poem which, under cover of allusion to an imaginary person already dead, is probably autobiographical, and gives us a picture of Wordsworth in 1795, is as follows:

> He was one who owned
> No common soul. In youth by science nursed,
> And led by nature into a wild scene
> Of lofty hopes, he to the world went forth
> A favoured Being, knowing no desire
> Which genius did not hallow; 'gainst the taint
> Of dissolute tongues, and jealousy, and hate,
> And scorn,—against all enemies prepared,
> All but neglect. The world, for so it thought,
> Owed him no service; wherefore he at once
> With indignation turned himself away,
> And with the food of pride sustained his soul
> In solitude.

This is no less than an epitome of his life before his reunion with Dorothy and his meeting with Coleridge, the brother of his soul. The strain is Byronic. Shelley, too, sounded a like complaint. Wordsworth was too strong, and also, it must be said, he became too happy, to linger in such a mood.

He rose above it by establishing his life, for a time, upon the principles of William Godwin. This is a fact which no biographer of the poet has ventured to deny, though many attempts have been made to minimize its importance. I am acquainted with no account of Wordsworth's life that does justice to the strength and attractiveness of the philosophy upon which he disciplined his powerful reasoning faculties, and to which he gave a brave and stubborn allegiance from his twenty-third to his twenty-ninth year. When one considers how, in the lives of nearly all poets, the third decade stands pre-eminent as a formative and productive period, it seems impossible to exaggerate the value of Godwin's ideas to Wordsworth. And Wordsworth is admitted to be a great philosophical poet. Yet all his biographers have termed Godwin's system "preposterous." Wordsworth, even when he renounced it, fully appreciated its compulsive appeal. And for at least three or four years it claimed both his intellectual assent and his active support. He went to great lengths. If Wordsworth had published his Reply to Bishop Watson, he would have been liable to prosecution on a charge of sedition. It is amazing that Godwin escaped being imprisoned or exiled for his "Enquiry concerning Political Justice." But books have their fates, and this remarkable treatise has fared ill, for it was from the beginning covered with obloquy, and probably no literary or philosophical work of equal value has been so little read in proportion to its merit. Such is the force of organized prejudice. The "patriotic" party were not content with crushing the democratic movement; they did their best to smother even the memory of it. Not only did they promptly check overt acts of a Revolutionary tendency; they entered into a century-

long conspiracy to suppress a number of noble intellectual works. Contemptuous disapproval was the means employed, and it succeeded. The share of Godwin's "Political Justice" in the thought of the nineteenth century has been inconsiderable, if we set aside its influence on Wordsworth and Shelley and the Utilitarian school of philosophy. No other fact so strikingly suggests the reactionary character of political theory in that century. The twentieth seems to have linked itself more directly to the eighteenth than to the nineteenth, which lies between its neighbours like a great confused parenthesis. More carefully stated, the truth may be that, of two eternally opposed and equally unconquerable kinds of thought, one, represented by Locke and Hume and Godwin, enjoyed, towards the close of the eighteenth century, a degree of general acceptance which until lately it has not enjoyed since; while the other kind, eloquently preached by Burke and Carlyle, and always more openly, more officially, more popularly held, has been for a much longer time dominant. There should be no illusions regarding the comparative attractiveness of these two systems. It is enough to observe that their merits have seldom been fairly contrasted.

Wordsworth, in the years we are considering, was a disciple of Godwin. This did not mean the acceptance of his master's political theory alone, but of his system as a whole. Godwin has this much at least in common with Locke, that his philosophy is integral. It is rigorously deduced from a few chief principles. Thus its ethics cannot be held separately from its metaphysics, nor can its politics be detached from its psychology. Although the largest and the soundest parts of the "Political Justice" are devoted to ethical and political considerations, which can hardly be distinguished from each other, as it is his dearest purpose to show they should not be, Godwin insists just as strongly on their dependence on his doctrine of knowledge and will. He is a determinist, and the only weak element of his book is the thinness of his argument for necessity. The many

pleas in favour of free-will which suggest themselves even to philosophers, as well as to ordinary thinkers, he almost wholly fails to take into account. Equally dogmatic, though not so audacious, because more widely shared, is his belief that experience is the source of all knowledge. "Nothing can be more incontrovertible," he asserts, "than that we do not bring pre-established ideas into the world with us." Justice, he contends, is the whole duty of man. And it seems that his criterion of justice is the greatest good of the greatest number: "utility, as it regards percipient beings, is the only basis of moral and political truth." Reason is the only organ whereby men can discover what is just: "to a rational being there can," he says, "be but one rule of conduct, justice, and one mode of ascertaining that rule, the exercise of his understanding."

Intuition and every form of mystical illumination, together with all authority, whether of numbers, antiquity, institutions, or "inspired words," are calmly set aside. Morality is a matter of knowledge: "the most essential part of virtue consists in the incessantly seeking to inform ourselves more accurately upon the subject of utility and right." He affirms these principles unhesitatingly, and as if they must, of course, be admitted by every thinking person to whom they are stated separately, each in its own strength. But he himself supplies in his practical illustrations difficulties which might not have occurred to a less acute mind, and a less honest mind would not have raised. And it was upon these examples that his opponents seized. For instance, since man is a moral being and all his actions are either just or unjust, he has no rights—*i.e.*, no moral options—but only duties. And therefore there is no place for deeds of gratitude, for pardon, for partiality to friends or kindred, for vindictive punishment. Moreover, a promise has no sanctity, and an oath is an abomination; because "an individual surrenders the best attribute of man the moment he resolves to adhere to certain fixed principles for reasons not now present to his mind, but which formerly were." Marriage,

accordingly, falls under his disapproval, in so far as it is a relation maintained solely in virtue of a promise. Creeds and similar fixed affirmations of belief lose their binding power, for, he says, "If I cease from the habit of being able to recall this evidence [that upon which the validity of a tenet depends], my belief is no longer a perception, but a prejudice." Some of these principles are to be found distinctly echoed in Wordsworth's "Borderers." Both that tragedy and the slightly earlier poem "Guilt and Sorrow" indicate that he was also imbued with Godwin's doctrine that "under the system of necessity the ideas of guilt, crime, desert, and accountableness, have no place." Godwin declares that, since the will is not free, "the assassin cannot help the murder he commits, any more than the dagger." Punishment, therefore, should be limited to restraining the criminal from repeating his act of injustice.

It is evident that a society holding such views must reject all but the barest essentials of government. Accordingly, Godwin insists that "government is an evil, an usurpation upon the private judgment and individual conscience of mankind." This would seem to be downright anarchism, and it must be said of Godwin, as Edward Caird said of Rousseau:*

> "His method is always determined by the individualistic prejudices of his time. In morals, in politics, and in religion alike, he goes back from the complex to the simple; and for him the simple is always the purely individual, the subject apart from the object, the man apart from society. He does not see that in this way he is gradually emptying consciousness of all its contents, and that of the abstract individual at which he must finally arrive nothing can be said."

But there can be no doubt that much of the constructive thought which found expression in early British Liberalism and in the Constitution of the United States followed this line. To many practical statesmen, as well as to Rousseau and Godwin, it seemed that the sole function of government was to secure liberty of action

* "Essays on Literature."

to the individual. Wordsworth was prepared for Godwin's uncompromising enunciation of this principle by his previous acceptance of Rousseau's doctrine that every individual is by nature independent. Godwin never shrank from rigorous deduction, and uttered his thought as clearly as he conceived it. Stated less dogmatically, the same idea, of course, is latent in the writings of the American Federalists and in Bentham and J. S. Mill. All these political theorists, having an eye to practice, checked themselves halfway. But many Continental writers, of whom Tolstoi is the best known, have gone as far as Godwin. Nor was Godwin himself afraid to be called an anarchist. "Where anarchy," he says, "has slain its hundreds, despotism has sacrificed millions upon millions." And it cannot be said that he had not present in his mind the full meaning of the term when he thus wrote, for "Political Justice" was published in 1793, the preface being dated January 7 of that year. It is doubtful whether Wordsworth or many other of Godwin's disciples possessed enough confidence in abstract reasoning to follow him to this extreme conclusion. They gave an eager assent, however, to the less incisive and more practical statement that government, as actually existing, "reverses the genuine propensities of mind, and, instead of suffering us to look forward, teaches us to look backward for perfection; it prompts us to seek the public welfare, not in innovation and improvement, but in a timid reverence." The pure word of the Revolution, a creed to which the young Wordsworth clung with passionate fervour, is condensed in a few articles. They lie more or less scattered in Godwin's "Enquiry." The first concerns prophecy: "To conceive an order of society totally different from that which is now before our eyes, and to judge of the advantages that would accrue from its institution, are the prerogatives only of a few favoured minds." The second concerns prerogative: "They are the higher orders of society that find, or imagine they find, their advantage in injustice, and are eager to invent argu-

ments for its defence." The third concerns popularity, or the wisdom of common people: "The vulgar have no such interest, and submit to the reign of injustice from habit only and the want of reflection. . . . A very short period is enough for them to imbibe the sentiments of patriotism and liberty." The fourth concerns property: "My neighbour has just as much right to put an end to my existence with dagger or poison as to deny me that pecuniary assistance without which I must starve, or as to deny me that assistance without which my intellectual attainments or my moral exertions will be materially injured." The fifth concerns priests: "Their prosperity depends upon the reception of particular opinions in the world; they must therefore be enemies to freedom of inquiry; they must have a bias upon their minds impressed by something different from the force of evidence." Every one of these articles is affirmed by Wordsworth, either graphically in his early poems, or dogmatically in his Reply to Bishop Watson, or by implication in his letters to Mathews.

To say that Godwin was lacking in historical feeling is putting the case too negatively. It is more correct to say that he chose not to be hampered by history. He regarded the present with keen perceptive powers, and looked to the future. The absence of a background in his picture of human destiny is not due to shallowness of literary culture, but to a deliberate theory. He was one of the last, and certainly the clearest, of the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. And his method, as regards the use of history, is precisely the method of that whole great movement.

A peculiarity of his own, however, is that he relies altogether upon his individual judgment, and not at all upon the collective judgment of his fellow-men, which he mistrusts because it has been institutionally organized, and thus clogged with the weight of selfish advantages. And even in his own case he trusts, or professes to trust, only his perceptive and logical powers, and not at all his affections. He has, however, by no means succeeded in shutting out every emotional influence. To take him at his word in this respect is to do him an injustice.

His principles are not cold-drawn. There is no fire more intense than the flame of pure intelligence. It is not conceivable that, without the tremor of inward burning, a man possessed as Godwin was, with a sense of responsibility, could write: "The doctrine of the injustice of accumulated property has been the foundation of all religious morality." The philosophy of the Enlightenment may well have been too difficult, too sheer, for minds accustomed to beaten tracks in the broad vales of thought, but it was not wanting in emotional splendour. Right or wrong, the man who could affirm that "there must in the nature of things be one best form of government," because "the points in which human beings resemble are infinitely more considerable than those in which they differ," was moved by a deep moral feeling, as well as by the perception of truths from which most men shrink.

There was an appeal to high-souled youth in his apparently quiet statement: "It is in the nature of things impossible that the man who has determined with himself never to utter the truths he knows should be an intrepid and indefatigable thinker. The link that binds together the inward and the outer man is indissoluble; and he that is not bold in speech will never be ardent and unprejudiced in enquiry." The voice of Burke, pleading for reverence towards the past, utters no call more eloquent and none so inspiring as this. German idealism, to be introduced into England presently by Coleridge, will teach perhaps a more aspiring ambition, but none so sane. Romanticism, more alluring to the artist, will lack something of this moral dignity. Not till Emerson comes, and after him the new leaders of scientific research, will that clear tone be heard again.

Godwinism soon fell into deep and undeserved disrepute. This was not due wholly to its peculiar features, some of which were beyond the comprehension of pragmatical minds, and others objectionable on the very grounds of practical utility to which Godwin sought to refer his thinking. It was due chiefly to the inherent unattractiveness of the whole philosophy of the Enlightenment, and to the inauspicious character of the

times. Pure rationalism can perhaps never be expected to win the favour of more than a small minority, even among reflective men. Its voice is in no age altogether silent, but the echoes nearly always come back mingled with alien notes, the note of Classicism, the note of Transcendentalism, the note of Romanticism.

That Godwin's system did, through Bentham and Mill, for a while at all events, and in a limited degree, *faire école*, is indeed remarkable. The age, moreover, was not propitious. The passion of patriotism, lately starved by the disapproval with which thoughtful Englishmen viewed the conduct of their government before and during the American War and throughout the period of State trials between its disastrous conclusion and the opening of the new French War in 1793, the impatient desire to justify England's past and her present course, made men very intolerant of Godwin's imperturbable criticism. This was no time, they thought, for reform. Wordsworth, one of the first, as he was the greatest of its converts, adhered to the Godwinian system for six years. He met the passion of the hour with his own deep inward passion. He conquered love of country with love of mankind. He rebuked with a reasoned hatred of war the elemental instincts of a people in arms. For six years his tenacious and inwardly energetic nature held fast its own religion. Well for him was it that prudence bade him keep to himself his perilous thoughts. Men were fined, imprisoned, and deported, for remarks no more seditious and far less explicit than his Reply to Bishop Watson. He was unable or unwilling, before Coleridge furnished him with a more supple dialectic than his own, to take advantage of the obvious defects of Godwinism, its inattention to human history, its blindness to the natural world, its indifference to the many irrational cravings of mankind. It is significant that both Goethe and Wordsworth, the greatest poets who crossed the threshold of the nineteenth century, were for a time votaries in the temple of rationalism, a temple nobly bare and generously open whether for entrance or egress, and that neither of them could compel himself to remain.

It is well known that in the character of the Solitary, in "The Excursion," Wordsworth has combined traits of several persons who had aroused his interest. The character was designed to represent a Godwinian, as the poet conceived of such a person in 1814. In the long, garrulous note dictated to Miss Fenwick in 1843, he speaks of the Solitary as follows:

"A character suitable to my purpose, the elements of which I drew from several persons with whom I had been connected, and who fell under my observation, during frequent residences in London at the beginning of the French Revolution. The chief of these was, one may *now* say, a Mr. Fawcett, a preacher at a dissenting meeting-house at the Old Jewry. It happened to me several times to be one of his congregation through my connection with Mr. Nicholson of Cateaton Street, who at that time, when I had not many acquaintances in London, used often to invite me to dine with him on Sundays; and I took that opportunity (Mr. N. being a dissenter) of going to hear Fawcett, who was an able and eloquent man. He published a poem on war, which had a good deal of merit, and made me think more about him than I should otherwise have done. But his Christianity was never very deeply rooted; and, like many others in those times of like showy talents, he had not strength of character to withstand the effects of the French Revolution, and of the wild and lax opinions which had done so much towards producing it, and far more in carrying it forward in its extremes. Poor Fawcett, I have been told, became pretty much such a person as I have described; and early disappeared from the stage, having fallen into habits of intemperance, which I have heard (though I will not answer for the fact) hastened his death."

Poor Fawcett indeed, if this were all. But the aged poet's reminiscences should never be accepted without scrutiny, except in regard to his own emotional life, and happily we are able to piece together, from other sources, a much more favourable account of this person. A patient search has failed to discover anything derogatory to his character, and the gossip about him which Wordsworth heard is only an instance of the way in

which men's reputations were assailed by those who took for granted that heterodox opinions must of necessity spring from a wicked heart and end in an evil life. The Rev. Joseph Fawcett was between thirty-five and forty years old in 1795, and had been preaching on Sunday evenings in a Dissenting church in the Old Jewry since about 1783. He preached to large intelligent audiences, upon whom he left an impression of originality and power. Among his hearers were Mrs. Siddons, the Kembles, Holcroft, the actor and dramatist, and perhaps also the comedian Charles Mathews, a brother of Wordsworth's most intimate friend. He left the ministry in 1795, and published in that year two volumes of sermons and a poem on "The Art of War," printed for J. Johnson. Of this generous and humane effusion a critic in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1795, judged far less favourably than Wordsworth, but deigned nevertheless to remark: "Mr. F. deserves commendation for awakening the milder feelings, and his expression will be pardoned for his sentiments." Two years later Fawcett published another long poem, "The Art of Poetry," and in 1798 appeared his collected "Poems," including both "The Art of War," now entitled "Civilized War," and "The Art of Poetry," this volume also being printed for Johnson. In the preface the author says of himself:

"However humble a place in the scale of poetical excellence his readers shall ultimately allot him, it will ever be a source of proud satisfaction to him to remember that the first poetical effort he submitted to the public eye was neither a simple attempt to amuse the fancy nor to soothe the heart, but an indignant endeavour to tear away the splendid disguise which it has been the business of poets in all nations and ages to throw over the most odious and deformed of all the practices by which the annals of what is called civilized society have been disgraced."

The poem is a noble piece of work and shows an enlightened spirit. In "A War Elegy," which follows, Fawcett, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, illustrates

the evils of war with a concrete instance. In his poem "On Visiting the Gardens of Ermenonville," he pays a hearty tribute to Rousseau. In the Advertisement to his "Ode on the Commemoration of the French Revolution, in the Champ de Mars, July 14, 1792," he declares that he witnessed the ceremonies described. In "The Art of Poetry" he gives a satirical recipe for a poem of the new, Romantic type:

> E'en listless fair ones shall from languor wake,
> And o'er the lines with pleasing terror shake,
> If there the lovely tremblers may peruse
> The harsh, coarse horror of a German muse.
> Let hideous Superstition form the base
> On which the wildly dismal tale you raise:
> Let ghastliest forms, pale ghosts, and goblins grim
> Form of your verse the terrible sublime!

His character as a Godwinian is plainly stamped upon his "Sermons delivered at the Sunday Evening Lectures for the Winter Season, at the Old Jewry," as may be seen from some of the titles, as, for example, "Right and Wrong Judgment the Origin of Virtue and Vice." Another, entitled "Christianity vindicated in not particularly inculcating Friendship and Patriotism," is a truly great and brave sermon, in which he says:

"Friendship and Patriotism, so far as they stand distinguished from general humanity and philanthropy, so far as we consider only what is *peculiar* to them, although the more passionate operations of them may have captivated the popular imagination, yet if examined with a cool and sober eye will appear not to possess, strictly speaking, any moral beauty, and therefore not to have merited a place among the precepts of him who came to inculcate simply pure religion and morality upon mankind. . . . Social virtue consists not in the love of this or the other individual or body of individuals, but in the love of man."

Another sermon, "On the Respect that is Due to all Men," is thoroughly equalitarian.

Among Fawcett's poems there is one, consisting of seven stanzas, entitled "Louisa: a Song." Words-

worth had it in memory, and was probably alluding to it consciously, when he wrote his own verses beginning "I met Louisa in the shade." Fawcett's first stanza is—

> As with Louisa late I sat,
> In yonder secret grove,
> How fondly did each bosom beat,
> And pour its tale of love!

Fawcett's "War Elegies" were published in 1801, three years before his death, which occurred at Hedgegrove, near Watford, in Hertfordshire. The writer of his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* dismissed him from life somewhat contemptuously as "an eccentric character," and referred slightingly to his works as being full of the "spirit of invention and bombast." But from Fawcett's inventive spirit so original a thinker as William Godwin had received some of his most striking ideas. He had known Fawcett for nearly twenty years before the date of "Political Justice," and declared him to be one of the four principal oral instructors to whom he felt his mind indebted for improvement, the others being Thomas Holcroft, George Dyson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. "Mr. Fawcett's modes of thinking," he wrote,* "made a great impression upon me, as he was almost the first man I had ever been acquainted with who carried with him the semblance of original genius." One of Fawcett's favourite topics, Godwin declared, "was a declamation against the domestic affections, a principle which admirably coincided with the dogmas of Jonathan Edwards, whose works I had read a short time before." What Godwin means when he refers in this cool way to the domestic affections will not appear monstrous to anyone who has read "Political Justice." When he asks the old question, "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" and gives the old and startling answer, he makes the sound inference, which weak mortality is very slow to accept, that domestic ties can never excuse unjust discrimination. No one who has read Godwin's heartbroken

* C. Kegan Paul, "William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries," 1896.

letters after the death of his wife can have any doubt that his own domestic affections, in spite of his austere habits of seclusion, were pure and strong.

The influence of Godwin on Wordsworth and Coleridge has never been satisfactorily explained or sufficiently emphasized. In his account of his life in 1794, he says: "It was in the close of this year that I first met with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, my acquaintance with whom was ripened in the year 1800 into a high degree of affectionate intimacy." It appears that he knew Wordsworth in 1798. He wrote of them in that year: "They are both extraordinary men, and both reputed men of genius." But there is every probability that Wordsworth and he had met in 1795 or earlier. The Mr. Nicholson with whom the young poet was in the habit of dining on Sundays when in London moved in Godwin's circle. He is often mentioned in Godwin's diary. He belonged to a small club, of which Thomas Holcroft and the actor Shield were members, called the Cannonian, after its president and founder, Cannon, an elderly Irishman, of bohemian habits, who was supposed to be engaged on an edition of Tibullus. At one time, long before Wordsworth's first visit to London, Nicholson lived in apartments which he rented from Holcroft, and the two wrote a novel together, which appeared in 1780 as "Alwyn, or the Gentleman Comedian." Mrs. Siddons's sister, the actress Elizabeth Kemble, afterwards Mrs. Whitelocke, rented lodgings from Holcroft in the same house. Holcroft's acquaintance with Godwin began in 1786, and it was he who reviewed "Political Justice" in *The Monthly Review*, in 1793. Before that work appeared, Godwin discussed its principles, "at occasional meetings," with Nicholson, Holcroft, Joel Barlow the American poet, Mackintosh, the author of "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," and David Williams, the anonymous author of "Lessons to a Young Prince," an extremely revolutionary book. In Godwin's diary the name of Nicholson occurs several times in brief remarks, such as "Sup at Nicholson's, talk of ideal unity." Similar remarks occur in Holcroft's "Memoirs,"

showing that he, too, was intimate with Nicholson. Godwin dined frequently at the hospitable board of Johnson, the publisher of "An Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches." Among the persons he met there were Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, who was employed by Johnson as a reader and translator. On December 11, 1794, Robert Lovell, the friend of Coleridge and Southey, wrote to Holcroft about their scheme of emigrating to America, and asked to be remembered to Nicholson and Godwin. This was only ten days after Holcroft's discharge from Newgate Prison, having been declared not guilty of the charge of treason for which he had lain committed since October. Nicholson was a teacher of mathematics and natural science, and a writer of books on chemistry. The name of Cateaton Street, where Wordsworth visited him, has disappeared from the map of London. It ran westward from the northern extremity of Old Jewry, and is now called Gresham Street. From Nicholson's house to Fawcett's chapel was only a step. To these curious affiliations may be added the fact that Nicholson was foreign agent for Thomas Wedgwood, the friend and patron of Coleridge, and that Basil Montagu, of whom we shall hear presently in connection with the Wordsworths, was a member of this circle of political and religious radicals.*

The most extensive notice of Fawcett by a contemporary is that of William Hazlitt in 1810, which is as follows, and makes a very different impression from that of Wordsworth's remarks to Miss Fenwick:

"It was he who delivered the Sunday evening lectures at the Old Jewry, which were so popular about twenty years ago. He afterwards retired to Hedge-

* In Kent's "London Directory," 1793, I find "Sam Nicholson and Co., Haberdashers, 15, Cateaton-st." According to an obituary notice in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LXXXV., p. 570, William Nicholson, the conductor of *The Philosophical Journal*, died May 21, 1815, in Charlotte Street, Bloomsbury, and in a longer account of him in Vol. LXXXVI., p. 70, we learn that he was living in 1792 in Red Lion Square. He had been engaged on the Continent as the Wedgwoods' commercial agent, and "translated from the French with great facility."

and, 9 thinks 1789 (FEB) (New St. Red Lion)

grove in Hertfordshire. It was here that I first became acquainted with him, and passed some of the pleasantest days of my life. He was the friend of my early youth. He was the first person of literary eminence whom I had then known; and the conversations I had with him on subjects of taste and philosophy (for his taste was as refined as his powers of reasoning were profound and subtle) gave me a delight, such as I can never feel again. The writings of Sterne, Fielding, Cervantes, Richardson, Rousseau, Godwin, Goethe, etc., were the usual subjects of our discourse, and the pleasure I had had in reading these authors seemed more than doubled. Of all the persons I have ever known, he was the most perfectly free from every taint of jealousy or narrowness. Never did a mean or sinister motive come near his heart. He was one of the most enthusiastic admirers of the French Revolution; and I believe that the disappointment of the hopes he had cherished of the freedom and happiness of mankind preyed upon his mind and hastened his death."*

It seems, then, from these bits of evidence, that during his various sojourns in London between January, 1793, and September, 1795, amounting in all to many months, Wordsworth lived in at least occasional connection with a circle that included Godwin, Nicholson, Fawcett, Holcroft, Shield, the Kembles, William Mathews, and perhaps his brother Charles, Johnson the bookseller, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Robert Lovell, Basil Montagu, and indirectly Coleridge, Southey, and the Wedgwoods. This is not to say that he was acquainted at any one time with all these persons. In those years, however, the entire number were more or less in communication with one another. The influence of Godwin was dominant among them. Some of them were under the ban of public censure for holding democratic principles. They sympathized with the French Revolution; they opposed the war. After the transportation of Muir, Palmer, Margarot, Skirving, and Gerrald, the banishment of Paine, and Dr. Priestley's emigration to America, the centre of political disaffection was to be found some-

* William Hazlitt's "Life of Holcroft," p. 171, London, 1902.

where within this circle. More and more, as the Revolution went to extremes, and the military success of France exasperated and consolidated English patriotism, the possession of extreme democratic ideals was narrowed down to members of this group, so far as the intellectual society of England was concerned. The independence of character and the confidence in rational deduction which made them radical in politics had the same effect in religion. Several of them were professed Unitarians, and active in the propagation of their faith. They were feared and denounced as free-thinkers no less than as levellers. A very well-defined line was drawn around them. Wordsworth could not have associated with them without being considered by his family to have definitely taken their side in all respects. He never maintained a lively intercourse with many acquaintances at once. If he was at all intimate with the revolutionary group in London, they probably absorbed nearly all his social activity for the time. And it is plain that whatever use he may have made in "The Excursion" of reminiscences of Fawcett, it was sympathy, not vagrant curiosity, that drew him to the meeting-house in Old Jewry, and a deep intellectual interest that made him a student of Godwin. Not "The Excursion," nor even "The Prelude," but "Guilt and Sorrow," "The Convict," and "The Borderers," provide the direct reflection of his mood in 1795.

It is possible also that Wordsworth first heard through Holcroft or Godwin, early in 1795, of the arrangements being made between Coleridge, Southey, Lovell, and one or two other young men, to migrate to America and establish a philosophical community.* As we have seen,

* Some of the stages of this enterprise are to be seen in Southey's correspondence, beginning with the Easter Sunday, 1793, when he tramped away from Oxford with Milton's "Defence" in his knapsack, wishing he had the pen of Rousseau. In a letter to H. W. Bedford, written at Bristol, November 13, 1793, he mentions, as a mere speculation, going to America. On December 14, and again later in the month, he refers to the project, in letters to G. Bedford. Coleridge came over to Oxford in June, 1794, and met Southey, who wrote to Grosvenor Bedford an enthusiastic account of his new acquaintance, June 12. Cuthbert Southey, in Vol. I., p. 211, of Southey's "Letters," gives the names of the proposed company as in-

Lovell had written about this plan to Holcroft in the preceding December. The idea was not without example. Dr. Priestley's withdrawal from mob violence and calumny in England to the peaceful shores of the Susquehanna was much discussed in the public prints. *The Gentleman's Magazine* for June, 1795, contained the following notice, which would naturally arouse a romantic interest:

" There is a colony established not far from the Susquehanna River, in America, by a class of wealthy Frenchmen, who formerly distinguished themselves in the Constituent Assembly of France, but were prudent enough to retire in time with their families and property; among them are Noailles, Talon, Blacon, Talleyrand, and other of the ci-devant noblesse: they have relinquished their titles, and have domesticated here in the most social manner. Their little settlement is called French Town. The tavern is kept by an officer who was formerly le baron Beaulieu !"

The settlement here referred to was made at Asylum, in what is now Bradford County, Pennsylvania. It was visited in May, 1795, by La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who described it minutely in the first volume of his " Voyage en Amérique." He made his way thither, along the Susquehanna, after visiting the home of Dr. Priestley, at Northumberland. Asylum had been established about fifteen months before, on land purchased through the agency of the great proprietors, Morris and Nicholson. Talon and Noailles had come to Pennsylvania by way of England. Among the settlers were M. de Blacons, formerly a deputy to the Constituent from Dauphiné, and M. Colin, formerly M. l'Abbé de Sévigny, Priest-Archdeacon of Toul, who were partners, and kept a store in the wilderness; M. de Montulé, formerly a cavalry captain; M. de Bec de Lièvre, formerly

cluding Southey, Robert Lovell, George Burnett of Balliol, Robert Allen of Corpus Christi, Oxford, Edmund Seward of Balliol, and S. T. Coleridge. Later adherents were Favell, Scott, and Le Grice. Seward died in 1795. The best and most tangible result of the scheme is intimated in Southey's enthusiastic remark to G. Bedford, in a letter from Bristol, February 8, 1795: " Coleridge is writing at the same table; our names are written in the book of destiny on the same page."

a canon, now a storekeeper; the Messieurs de la Roue, old army officers; M. de Noailles, of San Domingo; M. d'Andelot, of Franche-Comté, an ex-officer; M. du Petit-Thouars, an old naval officer, with a remarkable record for adventure and suffering; and several other ecclesiastics, merchants, and nobles. Thomas Twining, an Englishman, in his "Travels in America," says that he met the Count de Noailles, Count Tilley, and Volney, at the house of Mr. Bingham, in Philadelphia, in 1795, and that he saw walking in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, "a tall gentleman in a blue coat, pointed out as M. Talleyrand."* There were several French ladies of high rank and good education among the refugees on the Susquehanna, and a spirit of cheerful adventure pervaded the community. There can be scarcely any doubt that our young English collegians had their thoughts directed to America by hearing or reading some account of this colony.

Public interest in Dr. Priestley's settlement at Northumberland in Pennsylvania was very lively. For many years he had been the leader of the English Unitarians, and his name had been associated, whether justly or not, with that of Paine as that of a chief enemy of the British Constitution. Hundreds of attacks upon his religious and political opinions had appeared within the space of half a dozen years, in pamphlets, treatises, satirical poems, and printed sermons. No name appears so frequently as his among the book reviews of *The Gentleman's Magazine* and *The Monthly Review* between 1789 and 1796. His personal character was not spared by enemies both open and secret, though in no respect was its integrity really involved. Learned opponents, especially at Cambridge, were never weary of combining criticism of his chemical theories with charges of theological unsoundness. Now curiosity followed him beyond the Atlantic, while the malignity which had hounded him from England turned in triumph upon those of his way of thinking who remained. The pressure of Conservative opinion was enormous and unrelenting.

* J. G. Rosengarten, "French Colonists and Exiles in the United States," p. 129.

The poem "Guilt and Sorrow" contains faint but hardly mistakable traces of Godwin's philosophy and of Fawcett's teaching. It was not published as a whole until 1845, when it had been considerably altered. We may judge of the nature of the changes by comparing the thirty stanzas extracted from their setting, and printed in 1798 as "The Female Vagrant," with their final form. Though much of this part was, according to Wordsworth's recollection, composed in 1791 and 1792, the first draft of the entire poem was certainly not completed before 1794, and the work was rehandled in 1795. The action is represented as taking place during the American War. The leading psychological motive of the Sailor's story, which was composed later than the Woman's story, is the same as one which was presently to appear again in "The Borderers"—namely, that "sin and crime are apt to start from their very opposite qualities," a statement to which Godwin would have given his assent, and which is easily recognized as conformable to his view of human nature. Political disaffection shows itself in the fifth and sixth stanzas of "The Female Vagrant" as originally printed, where the legalized oppression of a poor man by his neighbour, a rich land-owner, is feelingly described. This passage was afterwards completely altered, being represented finally by the vague statement:

> But through severe mischance and cruel wrong,
> My father's substance fell into decay.

It is significant that another passage in the thirty stanzas originally printed as "The Female Vagrant" was also softened later into a far less bitter indictment of society. One of the main sources of evil represented in the Woman's story as well as in the Man's is war. In the fragment printed in 1798, the soldiery after whom the poor creature has dragged herself through America are called

> the brood
> That lap (their very nourishment) their brother's blood.

This was omitted in all editions after 1800, and if similar features once existed in the Sailor's story, as is probable

from the fact that a like fate had dragged him from his peaceful home and made him a man of blood against his will, they too have been expunged. There remains only an ironical reference to "social Order's care for wretchedness." As "Guilt and Sorrow" was finally published, it contained not a word against capital punishment, but ends with the poor Sailor's voluntary submission to the law, which avenges in his person a crime for which he has atoned, and the guilt of which has left no stain upon his soul. Here was ample opportunity to illustrate Godwin's doctrine of the injustice of retributive punishment, and especially of the death penalty. If the poem originally ended with such an illustration, Wordsworth in 1845 of course would not have let such an ending stand, for he had meanwhile, as if in expiation of former laxity, published fourteen sonnets in favour of capital punishment! But it is almost inconceivable that the poem in 1794 concluded with this note of acquiescence in the wisdom of an institution which not only Godwin's book, but events in France, had brought in question. The structural lines of the poem seem to converge towards something which they never reach, some passage of protest and revolt. Furthermore, in a letter to his friend Francis Wrangham, written November 20, 1795, Wordsworth says that he desired to publish a poem, the object of which "is partly to expose the vices of the penal law, and the calamities of war, as they affect individuals." It expressed his sentiments at that time no less than at an earlier period, for he declared that he had recently made alterations and additions so material that it might be looked on almost as another work. It is also evident from this letter that the poet had recently been with Wrangham in London, where he had read to his friend the first draft of this poem, and had planned others, of a satirical character, dealing with political questions. It would appear that he delayed realizing Dorothy's dream of a reunion and life in a cottage, in order to try once more to gain a livelihood by direct application of his powers to public affairs. Perhaps also much time was required to secure and invest the legacy of £900.

CHAPTER XII

DOROTHY

MEANWHILE Dorothy had to exercise patience. She spent the spring and summer, and part of the autumn of 1795, near Halifax, with her relative Mrs. Rawson, and was more or less in touch with Jane Pollard, so that apparently no letters passed between them. Besides, the latter was preparing for her marriage with Mr. Marshall, which took place before September 2. On that date we have the first record of a new life about to begin for the long-separated brother and sister, a life destined to be happy for them and memorable for mankind.

"I am going now to tell you," she writes to Mrs. Marshall, "what is for your own eyes and ears alone; I need say no more than this, I am sure, to insure your most careful secrecy. Know then that I am going to live in Dorsetshire. Let me, however, methodically state the whole plan, and then, my dearest Jane, I doubt not you will rejoice in the prospect which at last opens before me of having, at least for a time, a comfortable home and a house of my own. You know the pleasure I have always attached to the idea of home, a blessing which I so early lost (though made up to me as well as the most affectionate care of relatives not positively congenial in pursuits and pleasures could do, and with separate and distinct views)."*

Then follows a careful computation of the means which will enable her and William to maintain themselves. The house in which they expect to live belongs, she says, "to a Mr. Pinney, a very rich merchant of Bristol," who has given it up to his son. The latter,

* From a letter belonging to Mr. Marshall.

who has hitherto kept it open at some expense, has now offered to let William occupy it.

"He is to come occasionally for a few weeks to stay with us, paying for his board. William is at present staying with the Pinneys at Bristol. The house in Dorsetshire is furnished, and has a garden and orchard. I have great satisfaction in thinking that William will have such opportunities of studying as will be advantageous not only to his mind, but his purse. Living in the unsettled way in which he has hitherto lived in London is altogether unfavourable to mental exertion."

Raisley Calvert's legacy is about to be invested. "William finds that he can get 9 per cent. for the money upon the best security. He means to sink half of it upon my life, which will make me always comfortable and independent."

It is probable that Wordsworth was introduced to the Pinneys by Basil Montagu, at whose house in London he had been recently staying. He left his books there, and wrote to Mathews several weeks later, asking him to have them packed. Montagu, who was of the same age as the poet, had been with him at Cambridge, where he resided till 1795. He was a natural son of the Earl of Sandwich, who acknowledged him and left him a legacy, which, however, failed to reach its destination. Montagu then, in 1795, began to read law, and engaged in literary work. He was assisted later in life by Wordsworth's intimate friend, Francis Wrangham, in his edition of Bacon, and maintained a lifelong friendship with Coleridge and Wordsworth. His opinions were always liberal; in his youth and early manhood they were extremely radical. He is said to have been so zealous a follower of Godwin that at one time he thought seriously of relinquishing the profession of a lawyer on the ground that it was injurious to society. His first wife, whom he married the year of his graduation, and with whom he kept house in Cambridge while Wordsworth was still at college, died in childbirth, leaving him a son named Edward. This is the boy referred to in an "Anecdote for Fathers," and the lines beginning

"It is the first mild day of March." In their letters William and Dorothy call the child Basil. It is to him that she now refers as follows, in estimating their means of livelihood: "I think I told you that Mr. Montagu had a little boy, who, as you will perceive, could not be very well taken care of, either in his father's chambers, or under the uncertain management of various friends of Mr. M., with whom he has frequently stayed. Lamenting this, he proposed to William to allow him £50 a year for his board, provided I should approve of the plan." The motherly instincts of this young woman of twenty-three, which had already prompted her to keep a little school for her neighbours' children at Forncett, must have been gratified with this prospect. She even mentions an extension of the idea, for she adds:

"A natural daughter of Mr. Tom Myers (a cousin of mine whom I dare say you have heard me mention) is coming over to England by one of the first ships, which is expected in about a month, to be educated. She is, I believe, about three or four years old, and T. Myers' brother, who has charge of her, has requested that I should take her under my care. With these two children, and the produce of Raisley Calvert's legacy, we shall have an income of at least £170 or £180 per annum. . . . As for the little girl, I shall feel myself as a mother to her. . . . It is a painful idea that one's existence is of very little use, which I have been always obliged to feel hitherto. . . . I shall have to join William at Bristol, and proceed hence in a chaise with Basil to Racedown; it is fifty miles. I have received a very polite invitation from the Pinneys to stay at their house on my road."

Apparently the little girl did not join them, nor did Mr. Pinney's thirteen-year-old boy, whom William hoped to have as a pupil, and it is not likely that their income was nearly as large as she expected. But they had the cares and delights of young Basil's company for several years, and a realization of this fact helps us to understand many traits in Wordsworth's early poems. He keeps child nature constantly in view. The joyousness, the wonder, the power of concealment, the susceptibility to keen and unspeakable grief, the subtle and devious

ways of reasoning, which are some of the strongest traits of childhood, are felt in many a poem which Wordsworth wrote before he had children of his own to observe. One of the deepest peculiarities of his poetry is that it conveys a sense of having been written, not for children, but with consciousness of how a child thinks.

Miss Wordsworth's letter contains one more remark about her brother, which raises several interesting questions. She says: "By the bye, I must not forget to tell you that he has had the offer of ten guineas for a work which has not taken him much time, and half the profits of a second edition if it should be called for." To what work does this refer? Beyond reasonable doubt to "Guilt and Sorrow." As finally published, this poem contains 666 lines. We have seen that it once had a different ending and a different emphasis. To give a well-proportioned weight to its original "objects," which then were dear to the poet's heart, it must have been longer than it is in its present form. And even were this not the case, the poem would have been long enough for publication in a volume by itself. In the original editions, "An Evening Walk" contained only 430 lines, and "Descriptive Sketches" 813. It is evidently the same work that Wordsworth describes to Wrangham less than three months later in terms which unmistakably refer to "Guilt and Sorrow." He writes of it then as follows:* "Have you any interest with the booksellers? I have a poem which I should wish to dispose of, provided I could get anything for it. I recollect reading the first draft of it to you in London." To the same correspondent he writes on March 7, 1796:

"I mean to publish a volume. Could you engage to get rid for me of a dozen copies or more among your numerous acquaintance? The damages — to use a Lancashire phrase—will be four or five shillings per copy. I do not mean to put forth a formal subscription; but could wish, upon my acquaintances and *their* acquaintances, to quarter so many as would insure me from positive loss; further this adventurer wisheth not."

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 90: letter dated November 10.

And on the same day* Dorothy writes to Mrs. Marshall: "William is going to publish a poem. The Pinneys have taken it to the booksellers." May not the explanation of these various passages be that, while at Bristol towards the end of the summer, Wordsworth showed what he had written of "Guilt and Sorrow," or spoke of it, to the enterprising and ambitious publisher Joseph Cottle; that Cottle made him a tentative or conditional offer; that this was presently withdrawn or not accepted; that the poet then, as his November letter shows, thought of finding a London publisher; that failing in this, he sent it again to Cottle by the Pinneys? In any case, his efforts were unsuccessful, though Cottle in the end did publish the extract known as "The Female Vagrant" with the other "Lyrical Ballads" in 1798. The fact that Cottle in his "Early Recollections; chiefly relating to the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge," 1837, makes no reference to having met Wordsworth so early as 1795, nor to any negotiations of this kind, may be explained by his extraordinary vanity and his well-known lack of scruple about garbling letters and incidents. The pride of his life was to have been one of the early friends and helpers of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. He was quite capable of suppressing the evidence of a false start with one of them. Had the offer of ten guineas come from a London publisher, Wordsworth, one is almost forced to think, would have communicated the fact to Wrangham when touching on the subject of his proposed volume.

It is strange that no record of the first meeting between Wordsworth and Coleridge has come down to us. Something like the awe that Dante felt when he pondered on the results of the descent of Æneas to the "immortal world,"

> pensando l' alto effetto
> Ch' uscir dovea di lui, e 'l chi, e 'l quale,

creeps over one who attempts to weigh the consequences of that event. It occurred, I believe, somewhat earlier

* Professor Knight's guess at the date, "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 99, is obviously incorrect.

than has been generally supposed. Bishop Wordsworth in the "Memoirs" makes no mention of it at all. He does not introduce Coleridge upon the scene before June, 1797. J. Dykes Campbell, whose authority regarding facts in the life of Coleridge was unsurpassed, says with his customary caution, in his "Life of Coleridge": "The precise date of the first meeting of Coleridge and Wordsworth has not been ascertained, but a careful examination of all the evidence available, published and unpublished, has all but convinced me that it may have probably taken place as early as September, 1795." The only strong objection to extending this probability to an even earlier date is a remark written by Coleridge on the margin of a copy of his own "Poems" of 1797, under a note to his "Lines written at Shurton Bars, September, 1795": "This note was written before I had ever seen Mr. Wordsworth, *atque utinam opera ejus tantum noveram*." But by the time the volume was published he *had* seen Wordsworth, and in any case the marginal remark may have been written many years afterwards, and in that case might be inaccurate.*

As we have already seen, Coleridge was an enthusiastic admirer of Wordsworth's poems in November, 1793, when he discussed them with Christopher Wordsworth at Cambridge. They had many friends in common. It was known in the London circle which Wordsworth frequented that Coleridge, Southey, and other young men, were planning to emigrate to America. Their centre of operations was Bristol. The plan, which

* In Gillman's "Life of Coleridge," London, 1838, Vol. I., p. 74, occurs the following passage: "Some years since, the late Charles Matthews, the comedian (or, rather, as Coleridge used to observe, 'the comic poet acting his own poems') showed me an autograph letter from Mr. Wordsworth to Matthews' brother (who was at that time educating for the Bar), and with whom he corresponded. In this letter he made the following observation: 'To-morrow I am going to Bristol to see those two extraordinary young men, Southey and Coleridge.' Mr. Wordsworth then residing at Alfoxden. They soon afterwards formed an intimacy," etc. Of course, Gillman was mistaken in thinking Wordsworth resided at Alfoxden when this letter was written. It apparently refers to the first meeting of the poets. Coleridge and Southey were often in Bristol together from January to November, 1795.

came to be known as the Pantisocratic Scheme, was probably conceived in the spring of 1794, and matured, if the wild scheme could ever be termed mature, during a visit Coleridge, then a Cambridge undergraduate, made to Southey at Oxford in the following summer. The most trustworthy account of it is given in a letter from Southey to Cottle in 1836, quoted by Campbell in his " Life of Coleridge ":*

" In the summer of 1794 S. T. Coleridge and Hucks came to Oxford on their way into Wales for a pedestrian tour. Then Allen introduced them to me, and the scheme was talked of, but not by any means determined on. It was talked into shape by Burnett and myself, when, upon the commencement of the long vacation, we separated from them, they making for Gloucester, he and I proceeding on foot to Bath. After some weeks, S. T. C., returning from his tour, came to Bristol on his way, and slept there. Then it was that we resolved upon going to America, and S. T. C. and I walked into Somersetshire to see Burnett, and on that journey it was that he first saw Poole. He made his engagement with Miss [Sarah] Fricker on our return from this journey at my mother's house in Bath, not a little to my astonishment, because he had talked of being deeply in love with a certain Mary Evans. I had previously been engaged to my poor Edith [Fricker]. . . . He remained at Bristol till the close of the vacation [?]—several weeks. During that time it was that we talked of America. The funds were to be what each could raise—S. T. C. by the Specimens of the Modern Latin Poets, for which he had printed proposals, and obtained a respectable list of Cambridge subscribers before I knew him; I, by Joan of Arc, and what else I might publish. I had no . . . other expectation. We hoped to find companions with money."

A much more detailed account, and the earliest of which I have any knowledge, is a letter from Thomas Poole to a Mr. Haskins, dated September 2, 1794.

* I have examined at the British Museum " A Pedestrian Tour through North Wales in a Series of Letters," by J. Hucks, B.A.; London, 1795. The author says his companion wrote on a window-shutter at Ross lines beginning " Richer than misers o'er their countless hoards." There is disappointingly little else in the small volume about the wonderful companion. It has several passages of democratic, anti-military tenor.

Poole was an energetic and wealthy young tanner, of democratic principles, who lived at Nether Stowey, in Somerset, about thirty-five miles from Bristol:*

"DEAR SIR,—I received your obliging letter a day or two ago, and will with pleasure give you all the information I can respecting the emigration to America to which you allude. But first, perhaps, you would like to have some idea of the character of the projectors of the scheme. Out of eight whom they informed me were engaged, I have seen but two, and only spent part of one day with them; their names are Coldridge and Southey.

"Coldridge, whom I consider the Principal in the undertaking, and of whom I had heard much before I saw him, is about five-and-twenty, belongs to the University of Cambridge, possesses splendid abilities—he is, I understand, a shining scholar, gained the prize for the Greek verses the first or second year he entered the University, and is now engaged in publishing a selection of the best modern Latin poems with a poetical translation. He speaks with much elegance and energy, and with uncommon facility, but he, as it generally happens to men of his class, feels the justice of Providence in the want of those inferior abilities which are necessary to the rational discharge of the common duties of life. His aberrations from prudence, to use his own expression, have been great; but he now promises to be as sober and rational as his most sober friends could wish. In religion he is a Unitarian, if not a Deist; in politicks a Democrat, to the utmost extent of the word.

"Southey, who was with him, is of the University of Oxford, a younger man, without the splendid abilities of Coldridge, though possessing much information, particularly metaphysical, and is more violent in his principles than even Coldridge himself. In Religion, shocking to say in a mere Boy as he is, I fear he wavers between Deism and Atheism.

"Thus much for the characters of two of the Emigrators. Their plan is as follows:

"Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next.

* I have seen in the British Museum the original letter of inquiry from Josiah Haskins. As it is dated September 15, Poole's answer should probably be dated September 20. Haskins says he had just heard through Poole's brother of a scheme to emigrate to America, and desired further details.

Previous to their leaving this country they are to have as much intercourse as possible, in order to ascertain each other's dispositions, and firmly to settle every regulation for the government of their future conduct. Their opinion was that they should fix themselves at—I do not recollect the place, but somewhere in a delightful part of the new back settlements; that each man should labour two or three hours in a day, the produce of which labour would, they imagine, be more than sufficient to support the colony. As Adam Smith observes that there is not above one productive man in twenty, they argue that if each laboured the twentieth part of time, it would produce enough to satisfy their wants. The produce of their industry is to be laid up in common for the use of all; and a good library of books is to be collected, and their leisure hours to be spent in study, liberal discussions, and the education of their children. A system for the education of their children is laid down, for which, if this plan at all suits you, I must refer you to the authors of it. The regulations relating to the females strike them as the most difficult; whether the marriage contract shall be dissolved if agreeable to one or both parties, and many other circumstances, are not yet determined. The employments of the women are to be the care of infant children, and other occupations suited to their strength; at the same time the greatest attention is to be paid to the cultivation of their minds. Every one is to enjoy his own religious and political opinions, provided they do not encroach on the rules previously made, which rules, it is unnecessary to add, must in some measure be regulated by the laws of the State which includes the district in which they settle. They calculate that each gentleman providing £125 will be sufficient to carry the scheme into execution. Finally, every individual is at liberty, whenever he pleases, to withdraw from the society."*

By the autumn of 1795 the Pantisocratic dream had almost faded away. The adventurers consumed part of their energies in writing a drama, "The Fall of Robespierre," which Coleridge, Southey, and Lovell planned, and the first two wrote. Coleridge returned to Cambridge, but left college in December without taking his degree. Forgetting both the Susquehanna and his

* Mrs. Sandford, "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 96.

Sarah, he sought out his old schoolmate Charles Lamb, and was enjoying the freedom of bachelorhood and the conveniences of civilization at the Angel tavern or "the little smoky room at the Salutation and Cat," where, as his companion wrote, they "sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy." But Southey went to London to look for him, and brought him back to his lady at Bristol. Here they both, with Burnett, another of the band, lodged together and once more began to think seriously of America. Lovell was the first to take a practical step, by marrying Mary Fricker. Coleridge made a little money by lecturing. Joseph Cottle, himself only twenty-four years old, and a poet, but not a friend of Pantisocracy, helped the comrades to pay their bills by advancing money on poems written and unwritten.

The friendship between Coleridge and Southey became strained before the middle of 1795. It was at this time, I am inclined to think, that Wordsworth met them. Their fortunes were desperate. Their rose-coloured vision had faded away. The great contrast between their characters had begun to show itself. And although they kept their engagements and espoused each of them a Miss Fricker, marriage was no longer a move towards the communal life, with two or three hours a day of farming, on the banks of the Susquehanna. In estimating the likelihood that Wordsworth, if he remained any time at all in Bristol, would encounter this band of young men, several facts must be taken into consideration. They were persons of marked peculiarity. Cottle, in his very natural desire to provide a market for their literary efforts, would be sure to talk about them. Coleridge was "a noticeable man" and gave public lectures. Southey was a native of Bristol and well connected. They were all very young—Southey was twenty-one in August. Their peculiarities of manner, dress, and especially of opinion, must have made them objects of curiosity or alarm to the heavy-going merchants of that rich port, which still profited largely by the slave-trade. The town,

including the suburbs, had only about 60,000 inhabitants.

It was in August that Coleridge took a cottage at Clevedon, on the Bristol Channel, about twelve miles south-west of the city. In his volume of Poems published in 1796, the lines entitled "The Eolian Harp" are declared to have been "composed August 20, 1795, at Clevedon, Somersetshire." But as he was not married until October 4, it is not likely that he removed thither before that date. Coleridge's daughter Sara, seeking information as to the time of the first meeting of the poets, received the following answer from Mrs. Wordsworth, November 7, 1845:*

"With my husband's tender love to you he bids me say, in reply to a question you have put to him through Miss Fenwick, that he has not as distinct a remembrance as he could wish of the time when he first saw your father and your uncle Southey; but the impression upon his mind is that he first saw them both, and your aunt Edith at the same time, in a lodging in Bristol. This must have been about the year 1795."

Racedown is the name of a farm in Dorsetshire. It lies seven miles back from the shore of the English Channel, to the north-east of Lyme Regis, and is about equally distant from Lyme, Beaminster, Crewkerne, and Chard. A sharp point of Devonshire almost touches it, and Ottery St. Mary in that county, the birthplace of Coleridge, is only twenty-four miles distant. The land lies along the bed of a small watercourse that winds between bold hills. In sheltered parts it is fertile, and vegetation is abundant. But where the ground rises above the common level, the trees are stunted and bend weirdly in one direction, away from the sea. Heavy, flat-topped hills, that look like elephants' brows, push southward as if they still held the ocean at bay. On the highest of them, its immense flank rising from the edge of the Racedown fields, the green ramparts of an ancient "camp" still overlook the Channel. From the roads that follow

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 327.

the trend of the streams glimpses of blue water show themselves here and there as the valleys open out southward. Through these immense funnels the wind brings the scent and the sound of the sea, and the place is never quiet, for all its seclusion. The house is a stiff, dignified brick building, covered now with grey plaster. It looks comfortable, though a little gloomy. On each side of the ample door is one large window. There are three large windows on the second floor in front, and quite inappropriately there is a third story. Half the charm of English rural dwellings, whether cottage or hall, depends on their modesty, their correspondence to the character and needs of their inmates. Racedown is not grand enough to be called a country-seat nor plain enough to be called a farmhouse. Fifty yards in front of the door two high walls, of recent construction, curve away gracefully from a wide gateway, and rows of immense beeches follow the lines of the walls. Beyond, the ground falls away rapidly to the coast. It is a place where one might live for a long time absorbed by the immediate details of the buildings, the garden, the home-fields, the thickets that follow the stream, or, in half an hour's walk, enjoy a wide glittering prospect. The country even now is rather thinly settled. There are no large villages near. Three miles away, at the hamlet of Broadwindsor, is the ancestral home of the Pinney family. The owner of Racedown in 1795 was John Preter, who took the name of Pinney on succeeding to the estate in 1762. He was at one time High Sheriff of Dorset, and had two sons, John Frederick and Charles, and two daughters.

The Wordsworths went to Racedown in September, 1795.* The next date in connection with their life there is November 20, when William addressed a letter to Wrangham from "Racedown Cottage, near Crewkerne." He was still busy with a task he and Wrangham had undertaken together, which was the composition of satires on public men and measures, in imita-

* Mrs. Pinney, of Broadwindsor, Dorset, has the inventory which the poet signed on September 7. The house, she informs me, was lent to him rent-free.

tion of Juvenal. Among the objects of derision were King George, the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Norfolk, and, doubtless for private reasons, the Earl of Lonsdale. The specimen lines given in this letter are enough to make one thankful on many accounts—of which prudence is not the chief—that the rash satirist learned to suppress his rage.

In another but undated letter to Wrangham from Racedown containing satirical verses occurs the following passage on the Prince Regent:

> The nation's hope shall show the present time
> As rich in folly as the past in crime.
> Do arts like these a royal mind evince ?
> Are these the studies that beseem a prince ?
> Wedged in with blacklegs at a boxers' show,
> To shout with transport at a knock-down blow—
> 'Mid knots of grooms, the council of his state,
> To scheme and counter-scheme for purse and plate.
> Thy ancient honours when shalt thou resume ?
> Oh shame, is this thy service' boastful plume ?—
> Go, modern Prince ! at Henry's tomb proclaim
> Thy rival triumphs, thy Newmarket fame,
> There hang thy trophies—bid the jockey's vest,
> The whip, the cap, and spurs thy fame attest.

In the letter of November 20 he sends Wrangham more of his imitations, including a very daring couplet:

> Heavens ! who sees majesty in George's face ?
> Or looks at Norfolk, and can dream of grace ?

And of this he says:

" The two best verses of this extract were given me by Southey, a friend of Coleridge's: ' Who sees majesty,' etc. He supplied me with another line which I think worth adopting. We mention Lord Courtenay: Southey's verse is, ' Whence have I fallen ? alas ! what have I done ?' a literal translation of the Courtenay motto, ' Unde lapsus ? quid feci ?' "*

It is in this letter also that Wordsworth mentions "Guilt and Sorrow ":

* See an article by Mr. T. Hutchinson in *The Athenæum* for December 8, 1894, in which the importance of Wordsworth's letter is pointed out as showing positively that he had met Coleridge in 1795.

"I have a poem which I should wish to dispose of, provided I could get anything for it. . . . Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law, and the calamities of war as they affect individuals."

We may gain some idea of his poverty and the deep seclusion of Racedown from the following passage:

"You flattered me with a hope that, by your assistance, I might be supplied with the Morning Chronicle; have you spoken to the editors about it? If it could be managed, I should be much pleased; as we only see here a provincial weekly paper, and I cannot afford to have the Chronicle at my own expense. I have said nothing of Racedown. It is an excellent house and the country far from unpleasant, but as for society we must manufacture it ourselves. Will you come and help us? We expect Montagu at Christmas, and should be very glad if you could make it convenient to come along with him. If not, at all events, we shall hope to see you in the course of the next summer."

In another letter to Wrangham, apparently of not much later date, he says: "We have neither magazine, review, nor any new publication whatever." He modestly declines to set up as a schoolmaster, saying: "As to your promoting my interest in the way of pupils, upon a review of my own attainments I think there is so little that I am able to teach that this scheme may be suffered to fly quietly away to the paradise of fools."

From the two letters, Professor Knight has printed 158 lines of the satires,* but as they stand they scarcely make sense. Their purport, however, is plain enough, and the poet's nephew described them with precision when he wrote:† "These specimens exhibit poetical vigour, combined with no little asperity and rancour against the abuses of the time, and the vices of the ruling powers, and the fashionable corruptions of aristocratical society." The most vivid picture in the fragments is that of a subservient Parliament and the mad King:

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 88 and 94.

† "Memoirs," I. 95.

So patient Senates quibble by the hour
And prove with endless tongues a monarch's power,
Or whet his kingly faculties to chase
Legions of devils through a keyhole's space.

Wrangham was a prolific author of verse and prose, but I have discovered nothing in his writings which indicates that he ever published his part of this joint production. Wordsworth was even then finding more congenial modes of expression, and it was not to be expected that a man of so little practical experience of public life, and living far, moreover, from the scene of combat, could continue to criticize passing events with the light and yet penetrating touch that satire demands. And so he, too, suppressed his part of this adventure. He was already engaged upon another. He announced to Wrangham: "I have been employed lately in writing a tragedy—the first draft of which is nearly finished." The same letter contains a humorous allusion to Godwin's curious doctrine on the subject of promises, and another profession of poverty. Ten to one, he says, he will not be able to release Wrangham's reply from the post-office unless it is franked. He has been living lately, he gaily says, upon air and the essence of carrots, cabbages, turnips, and other esculent vegetables, not excluding parsley, the produce of his garden.

In another letter to Wrangham,* dated March 7 (1796 evidently), he congratulates him, somewhat jocosely, on having been presented to a very rich living, as Rector of Hunmanby, in Yorkshire, and expresses a hope that his friend will now, "like every sensible rich man," turn his thoughts towards travel. This, we may be sure, is what he would have done himself, for he was always possessed with a love of wandering, and gratified it frequently when his circumstances permitted, and even sometimes when they seemed very unpropitious. He says he does not mean "to drop the Juvenal scheme," and has been working at it that morning. "We have had the two Pinneys with us," he remarks, "John for a month. They left us yesterday, and, as I now feel a

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 101.

return of literary appetite, I mean to take a snack of satire by way of sandwich." Alluding again to Wrangham's promotion and to Montagu's ill-fortune in losing his father's legacy, he says: " I have been engaged an hour and a half this morning in hewing wood and rooting up hedges, and I think it no bad employment to feel ' the penalty of Adam ' in this way. Some of our friends have not been so lucky, witness poor Montagu." In a postscript he adds: " Basil is quite well, *quant au physique, mais pour le moral, il y a bien à craindre.* Among other things, he lies like a little devil."

On March 21, 1796, and this time in a letter to Mathews, he writes:*

" I was tolerably industrious in reading, if reading can ever deserve the name of industry, till our good friends the Pinneys came among us; and I have since returned to my books. As to writing, it is out of the question. Not, however, entirely to forget the world, I season my recollection of some of its objects with a little ill-nature—I attempt to write satires; and in all satires, whatever the authors may say, there will be found a spice of malignity."

Years afterwards, in 1807, Wordsworth forbade Wrangham to publish these verses, alleging with great solemnity that he had " long since come to a fixed determination to steer clear of personal satire." Many reasons had, moreover, by that time made it undesirable that his name should be mentioned in connection with the work.

It is amazing how numerous were the ties that bound Wordsworth's youthful friends to one another. It is evident that Mathews, too, was acquainted with the Pinneys, for the poet writes to him:

" I fully expected to hear from you by Azar Pinney [Azariah is a name that occurs several times in the Pinney pedigree], and was not a little surprised you omitted so good an opportunity of sending me the volume of fugitive poetry."

* " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 107.

And then, referring perhaps to the Cannonian Club, to which Holcroft and some of his friends, as we have seen, belonged, he continues:

"Pray write to me at length, and give me an account of your proceedings in the Society, or any other information likely to interest me. Are your members much increased? and what is of more consequence, have you improved I do not ask in the [art] of speaking, but in the more important one of thinking?"

The Pinneys probably brought a copy of Southey's epic poem, "Joan of Arc," which Wordsworth criticizes severely, in a passage from which I infer that the young Oxford poet was known personally, and unfavourably, to Mathews. Montagu has sent a copy of the second edition of "Political Justice," and the recluse shows his previous acquaintance with the work by remarking that he expects to find it much improved. He thinks the preface badly written. "Give me some news about the theatre," he begs; "I have attempted to read Holcroft's Man of Ten Thousand, but such stuff." And after beseeching Mathews to come and visit him, he says: "My sister would be very glad of your assistance in her Italian studies. She has already gone through half of Davila,* and yesterday we began Ariosto." From these few lines of Wordsworth's, and with the knowledge that he was then composing his tragedy "The Borderers," we may form some idea of how he employed himself during the twenty-two months, more or less, that he lived at Racedown. There is here no trace whatever of that mental depression, that clouding of his spiritual faculties, that moroseness, which we have been so often told worked a crisis in his life and particularly characterized the early months of his residence in Dorsetshire. Affecting pictures have again and again been drawn of a young sufferer, his heart chilled, his intellect sated, by the sophistries of rationalism, creeping to this lonely

* If this was Davila's "Istoria delle Guerre civili di Francia," an ancient copy of which was catalogued among Wordsworth's books after his death, it was rather solid reading for a beginner, and in old-fashioned Italian, too.

place, and here recovering his faith through the ministrations of his sister and the kindly influence of nature. Some very small degree of truth perhaps there is in these descriptions. They find a general warrant in certain passages of "The Prelude" and "The Excursion." And after the crowding experiences of the preceding eight years, with their frequent changes of scene, their homeless wanderings, their generous hopes, and sharp disappointments, after keen intercourse with men struggling to establish new and despised systems, after the miserable life of cities, we might expect to find him weary and longing for a chance to think out his future course; but in his letters from Racedown there is of all this not a word. We see him more cheerful than he was a year before, in the north, and intellectually more active; we feel in what he writes to Wrangham and Mathews an abounding energy, and, above all, a tone of self-confidence. Moreover, there is here no hint that he has broken or desired to break with his old connections in London. Politics, the theatre, the books of his acquaintances, still interest him. He begs eagerly to be kept informed of what is going on in the world. He gives absolutely no ground to suppose that he has been disillusioned with regard to the social and religious views professed by himself and his friends. The causes of his retirement, he gives it to be understood, are poverty and a wish to study. If he was ever to carry out the long-cherished plan of living with his sister, the opportunity of having a large house in the country, rent-free, and in a place where his little income would go farthest, was not to be rejected. The quiet of Racedown gave him a chance to do some of that extensive reading, which, as Professor Lane Cooper has painstakingly shown,* included many works of modern European literature, and especially books of travel. The fact that he was writing a tragedy is no proof that his own mood was tragic.

* "A Glance at Wordsworth's Reading," *Modern Language Notes*, March and April, 1907. See also K. Lienemann, "Die Belesenheit von William Wordsworth," Berlin, 1908.

Perhaps, then, in Dorothy's letters from Racedown we shall find evidence in support of the traditional theory. Perhaps in her simpler though not more open-hearted style, she will reveal his secret grief. But this is not so. She gives a charming and harmonious picture of domestic happiness. They are both busy with their reading and the education of little Basil. Visitors are few. They fare plainly, but pleasantly. They enjoy their big house. The country round about draws them forth on long walks. She is perfectly happy, perfectly in accord with her brother, zealous to have him succeed in his work. There is nothing whatever to suggest that she is trying " to win him back " to something that he has left behind.

Her letters from Racedown to Mrs. Marshall are most engaging. She begins to reveal in them for the first time her extraordinary gift of direct observation and accurate description. Her remarks on the bringing up of children are very sound for a girl of twenty-three, and the plan she was following in the case of Basil shows that she had some acquaintance with Rousseau's theory. The first letter is dated November 30,* and opens with an apology for not writing sooner after her arrival:

" We are now surrounded with winter prospects without doors, and within have only winter occupations, books, solitude, and the fireside; yet I may safely say we are never dull. Basil is a charming boy; he affords us perpetual entertainment. Do not suppose from this that we make him our perpetual plaything, far otherwise. I think that is one of the modes of treatment most likely to ruin a child's temper and character; but I do not think there is any pleasure more delightful than that of marking the development of a child's faculties and observing his little occupations. We found everything at Racedown much more complete with respect to household conveniences than I could have expected. You may judge of this when I tell you that we have not had to lay out ten shillings on the house. We were a whole month without a servant, but now we have got one of the nicest girls I ever saw; she suits us exactly, and I have all my domestic concerns so arranged

* In Mr. Marshall's collection.

that everything goes on with the utmost regularity. . . . We walk about two hours every morning. We have many very pleasant walks about us; and, what is a great advantage, the roads are of a sandy kind and almost always dry. We can see the sea 150 or 200 yards from the door, and, at a little distance, have a very extensive view terminated by the sea, seen through different openings of the unequal hills. We have not the warmth and luxuriance of Devonshire, though there is no want either of wood or cultivation; but the trees appear to suffer from the sea-blasts. We have hills which—seen from a distance—almost take the character of mountains; some cultivated nearly to their summits, others in a wild state, covered with furze and broom. These delight me the most, as they remind me of our native wilds. . . . I have had only one great disappointment since we came, and that is about the little girl. I lament it the more, as I am sure if her father knew all the circumstances, he would wish her to be placed under our care. Mr. Montagu intended being with us a month ago, but we have not seen him yet. I have the satisfaction of thinking that he will see great improvements in Basil."

Towards the conclusion of this, her first letter from Racedown to Mrs. Marshall,* Dorothy makes a statement which shows that the ties which bound her brother to France were by no means yet broken, and that they were known to her and to her friend: "William has had a letter from France since we came here. Annette mentions having despatched half a dozen, none of which he has received." She has an eye for the condition of the poor country-people about her, which compared unfavourably with that of the Cumberland and Westmorland "statesmen." "The peasants are miserably poor," she writes; "their cottages are shapeless structures of wood and clay: indeed, they are not at all beyond what might be expected in savage life." Appearances at least have much improved since.

In another letter to Mrs. Marshall, written evidently on March 7, 1796,† she says:

* Professor Knight prints this conclusion, in "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 103, out of place. It is really a part of the letter dated November 30. "The little girl" means Myers's child.

† In Mr. Marshall's collection.

" We have not seen Mr. Montagu, which disappointed us greatly. . . . The Pinneys have been with us five weeks, one week at Christmas and a month since. They left us yesterday. We all enjoyed ourselves very much. They seemed to relish the pleasures of our fireside in the evening and the excursion of the morning. They are very amiable young men, particularly the elder. He is two and twenty, has a charming countenance, and the sweetest temper I ever observed. He has travelled a good deal in the way of education, been at one of the great schools, and at Oxford, has always had plenty of money to spend. This instead of having spoiled him, or made him conceited, has wrought the pleasantest effects. He is well informed, has an uncommonly good heart, and is very agreeable in conversation. He has no profession. His brother has been brought up a merchant. . . . We have read a good deal while they were with us (for they are fond of reading), but we have not gone on with our usual regularity. When the weather was fine they were out generally all the morning, walking sometimes. Then, I went with them frequently, riding sometimes, hunting, coursing, cleaving wood—a very desirable employment, and what all housekeepers would do well to recommend to the young men of their household in such a cold country as this, for it produces warmth both within and without doors."

Lovers of English poetry may congratulate themselves that this method of employing handsome young visitors did not have the same result at Racedown as on Prospero's enchanted isle. It is pleasant, though rather startling, to think of Dorothy Wordsworth coursing hares and fox-hunting.

" I have not spoken of Basil yet," she continues. " He is my perpetual pleasure, quite metamorphosed from a shivering half-starved plant to a lusty, blooming, fearless boy. He dreads neither cold nor rain. He has played frequently for an hour or two without appearing sensible that the rain was pouring down upon him, or the wind blowing about him. I have had a melancholy letter from Mary Hutchinson. I fear that Margaret is dead before this time. She was then attending her at Sockburn, without the least hope of her recovery. Last year at this time we were all together, and little supposed that any of us was so near death."

She tells of a grand dinner-party they gave while the Pinneys were with them, to which they invited their neighbours: "and very dull it was, except for the entertainment of talking about it before and after." She gives a glimpse of her more serious life:

"I am studying my Italian very hard. I am reading the Fool of Quality, which amuses me exceedingly. Within the last month I have read Tristram Shandy, Brydone's Sicily and Malta, and Moore's Travels in France. I have also read lately Madame Roland's Memoirs and some other French things."

She mentions* that her brother and the Pinneys had been at Crewkerne to dinner, and were detained by a fire. In another letter, dated March 19, and postmarked "Crewkerne, Mar 27 97," but which Professor Knight dates, incorrectly, 1796, she describes at considerable length their method of managing and teaching little Basil. It all sounds like a page from "Émile."

"We teach him nothing at present," she says, "but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity, which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability. It is directed to everything he sees, the sky, the fields, trees, shrubs, corn, the making of tools, carts, etc. He knows his letters, but we have not attempted any further step in the path of *book-learning*. Our grand study has been to make him *happy*, in which we have not been altogether disappointed. . . . We have no punishments, except such as appear to be, so far as we can determine, the immediate consequences that grow out of the offence."

She says that Montagu had come to them unexpectedly, and that he and William had started that morning for Bristol, where they were to spend about a fortnight. A year before—in March, 1796—Coleridge was at Bristol, getting out, with what excitement can be imagined, the first four numbers of *The Watchman*, a periodical miscellany, intended, as the Prospectus declared, "to proclaim the State of the Political Atmosphere, and preserve Freedom and her Friends from the attacks of

* In a letter hitherto unpublished, belonging to Mr. Marshall.

Robbers and Assassins ! !" In the spring of 1796, while he was " on Watch," as he says, Coleridge wrote to Cottle declaring his intention of giving away a sheet full of sonnets, one to Mrs. Barbauld, one to Wakefield, the radical pamphleteer, one to Dr. Beddoes, one to Wrangham, whom he calls " a college acquaintance of mine, an admirer of me, and a pitier of my principles," one to C. Lamb, one to Wordsworth, etc. Coleridge, Lamb, Wrangham, and Wordsworth ! The lines were already converging. In a long letter to Thelwall, dated May 13, 1796,* Coleridge refers unmistakably to Wordsworth, though without naming him. " A very dear friend of mine," he says, " who is, in my opinion, the best poet of the age (I will send you his poem when published), thinks that the lines from 364 to 375 and from 403 to 428 are the best in the volume,—indeed, worth all the rest." Coleridge is referring here to his own book. He continues: " And this man is a republican, and, at least, a *semi*-atheist."

In March, 1797, Wordsworth would be likely to see Coleridge in Bristol, though by this time *The Watchman* had long since ceased to warn the public, and its editor was living at Nether Stowey. He was not the man to stay in a place because he belonged there, and he is known to have been preaching at this time in the Unitarian chapels of Taunton and Bridgwater. He may easily have been in Bristol too, and Mrs. Sandford, in that precious and carefully edited book, " Thomas Poole and his Friends," says that " during the early months of 1797, Coleridge seems to have been often to and fro between Bristol and Stowey."

It is more surprising that Wordsworth should have left Racedown at this time, for his old friend and future wife, Mary Hutchinson, was visiting his sister.

" You perhaps have heard," the latter writes,† in her enthusiastic way, " that my friend Mary Hutchinson is staying with me. She is the best girl in the world, and

* Ernest Hartley Coleridge, " Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," Vol. I., pp. 163, 164.

† In the letter, already mentioned, of March 19, 1797.

we are as happy as human beings can be, that is," she adds ruefully, "when William is at home; for you cannot imagine how dull we feel, and what a vacuum his loss has occasioned, but this is the first day; to-morrow we shall be better; we feel the change more severely as we have lost both Montagu and him at once. M. is so cheerful and made us so merry that we hardly know how to bear the change. Indeed, William is as cheerful as anybody can be; perhaps you may not think it, but he is the life of the whole house."

She writes with the same girlish simplicity that she is excessively pleased with Mr. Montagu, that he is one of the pleasantest men she ever saw, and so amiable and good that everyone must love him.

It may have been during this visit to Bristol that Wordsworth met Thomas Poole, Coleridge's good angel. The following letter shows that Coleridge visited Wordsworth in June, 1797, at Racedown, and indicates besides that the latter already knew Poole and Cottle. Part of it was printed by Cottle in his "Early Recollections," and again, with a wrong date, in his "Reminiscences." J. Dykes Campbell saw the original, and was led to infer from the sentence about Poole that it seemed "to point to a previous visit or visits to Stowey paid by Wordsworth, or to meetings with Poole at Bristol, of which direct record is lacking." A less cautious reader than Campbell might go further, and surmise that this was not the first time Cottle had been informed that Wordsworth had written a play. When the latter left the two young ladies at Racedown mourning his departure, he probably sacrificed inclination to business, and what business could have appeared to him more urgent than the launching of his tragedy? Having done all he could in that direction, in March, he would naturally seek to renew his intercourse with Coleridge, and if he had not met Poole before, he would do so then. Coleridge, as we have seen, returned the visit in June. His letter from Racedown was finally printed by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in his "Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," Vol. I., p. 220. The probable date, the editor says, is Thursday, June 8. He notes that "On

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

From a drawing by Hancock about 1796

[Vol. I., p. 296

Monday, June 5, Coleridge breakfasted with Dr. Toulmin, the Unitarian minister at Taunton, and on the evening of that or the next day he arrived on foot at Racedown, some forty miles distant." Omitting three sentences which have reference only to the forthcoming volume of poems, which Cottle was printing, it is as follows:

"*June*, 1797.

"MY DEAR COTTLE,—I am sojourning for a few days at Racedown, the mansion of our friend Wordsworth, who has received Fox's 'Achmed.' He returns you his acknowledgments, and presents his kindliest respects to you. I shall be home by Friday—not to-morrow—but the next Friday. . . . Wordsworth admires my tragedy, which gives me great hopes. Wordsworth has written a tragedy himself. I speak with heartfelt sincerity, and (I think) unblinded judgment, when I tell you that I feel myself *a little man by his side*, and yet do not think myself the less man than I formerly thought myself. His drama is absolutely wonderful. You know I do not commonly speak in such abrupt and unmingled phrases, and therefore will the more readily believe me. There are in the piece those *profound* touches of the human heart which I find three or four times in 'The Robbers' of Schiller, and often in Shakespeare, but in Wordsworth there are no *inequalities*. T. Poole's opinion of Wordsworth is that he is the greatest man he ever knew; I coincide.

"It is not impossible that in the course of two or three months I may see you. God bless you and

"S. T. COLERIDGE."

It would almost appear that the writer, knowing Cottle's amiable ambition to be the publisher of men of poetical genius, was trying to inflame his zeal to the point of undertaking to bring out "The Borderers." It will be observed from the first sentence that Cottle and Wordsworth were already acquainted, though the former is presumed not to have heard of the tragedy.

There could be no more characteristic introduction of Coleridge as Wordsworth's generous admirer, enthusiastic critic, and intimate friend than this letter. Their paths were drawn together and their destinies united by the same mysterious power that gave to English poetry

at almost the same moment a Sidney and a Spenser, and, again, a Marlowe and a Shakespeare. How much help they were to be to each other in the coming years! How they were each to add to the other's poetic vision and poetic faculty! How many sorrows they bore in common and for one another's sake, and how great is the glory they share!

Half a century later, when Dorothy's mind had given way under the strain of too much sympathy and thought, and Coleridge was beyond the touch of infirmity, the aged survivors of that group recalled vividly the happy hour when they all four came together for the first time. Mrs. Wordsworth wrote to Sara Coleridge, November 7, 1845:*

"Your father came afterwards to visit us at Racedown, where I was living with my sister. We have both a distinct remembrance of his arrival. He did not keep to the high road, but leaped over a high gate and bounded down the pathless field, by which he cut off an angle. We both retain the liveliest possible image of his appearance at that moment. My poor sister has just been speaking of it to me with much feeling and tenderness."

Were it not for this reminiscence, we should not have known that Mary Hutchinson spent the whole spring at Racedown. She was an eminently cheerful, sensible person, and her presence at the farmhouse could not have been consistent with the melancholy with which an unfounded tradition has invested Wordsworth's residence there. Compared with the bright, open situation of Alfoxden, his next home, Racedown might be considered dark, but when we remember how young its occupants were, and how young all their visitors, fancy loves to picture them chatting gaily about a wood fire in their common parlour, "the prettiest little room that can be," or strolling through the apple orchards, which were so numerous, Dorothy tells us, that nobody thought of enclosing them, or climbing through yellow

* This version of Mrs. Wordsworth's letter differs in several particulars from another I have seen.

furze to the broad top of Pilsdon Pen to gaze upon the English Channel. When Coleridge was there, indoor delights sufficed. He was a man for the fireside and long evenings with books and talk.

"You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge," wrote Dorothy after his departure.* "He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mirth, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and—like William—interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain—that is, for about three minutes. He is pale and thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish loose growing half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, not dark but grey; such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression, but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind. It has more of the 'poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead. The first thing that was read after he came was William's new poem, The Ruined Cottage, with which he was much delighted; and after tea he repeated to us two acts and a half of his tragedy Osorio. The next morning William read his tragedy The Borderers."

Part of the poem here called "The Ruined Cottage" is to be found embedded in "The Excursion." It is the oldest portion of that work—lines 871 to 916 of the first book. Commenting on the passage in 1843, the poet says: "All that relates to Margaret and the ruined cottage, etc., was taken from observations made in the south-west of England." It shows that he was still deeply concerned with the evil effects of war. Margaret is left to grieve amid the ruins of her home because her husband, hopeless through poverty, has "joined a troup of soldiers, going to a distant land." Not only the forty-five lines specified above, but fully half of the book, does this subject occupy. It is impossible to say how much of the original poem has been actually retained.†

* "Memoirs," I. 99. It is not known to whom this letter was written.

† See *The Athenæum*, August 13, 1904, and Mr. T. Hutchinson's note on p. 251 of his edition of "Lyrical Ballads."

Two other pieces of verse probably written by Wordsworth at Racedown, or perhaps before he went there, have come down to us. One, entitled "The Birth of Love," appeared under Wordsworth's name in a volume of poems published by Wrangham, and is a translation of some French lines.* Wordsworth never reprinted it. Another, "The Convict," appeared in "Lyrical Ballads," 1798, and was thenceforth dropped from the poet's edition of his works. The contrast in execution between these two pieces is very great. The former has a certain brilliancy, demanded by the subject-matter, which is clever and conventional. The latter is laboured and unmusical. It possesses no other value than its political significance. The poet compares the sleep of a King—who is presumed to be necessarily a guilty person—with the horrid dreams of a convict shut up to brood over his fault:

> When from the dark synod, or blood-reeking field,
> To his chamber the monarch is led,
> All soothers of sense their soft virtue shall yield,
> And quietness pillow his head.

But the poor convict, through tumult and uproar, is denied even a brief forgetfulness of *his* crimes. The last stanza, as printed in "Lyrical Ballads," contained a humane expression which carries us back again to "Political Justice":

> At thy name though compassion her nature resign,
> Though in virtue's proud mouth thy report be a stain,
> My care, if the arm of the mighty were mine,
> Would plant thee where yet thou might'st blossom again.

M. Legouis remarks that in this "thoroughly Godwinian poem" Wordsworth dramatized "the philosopher's favourite idea for the reformation of the penal laws"—*i.e.*, transportation as a substitute for capital punishment. It is altogether to the credit both of Godwin and his disciple that they felt the folly and wickedness of the penal code in their time. And

* "L'Éducation de l'Amour," by the Vicomte de Ségur.

as Milton attained full stature as a poet only after twenty years of attention to public affairs, so we have no reason to regret that Wordsworth for a time gave himself to such questions, even if, as is not at all certain, he thereby delayed the expansion of his poetic powers.

"The Convict" was originally printed in *The Morning Post*, December 14, 1797, and this version shows very emphatically the poet's anti-monarchical principles, as may be seen in the following stanzas, contrasting the lot of the king and the felon:*

> When from the dark Synod, or blood-reeking field,
> To his chamber the MONARCH is led,
> All soothers of sense their soft virtue shall yield,
> And silent attention shall pillow his head.
>
> If the less guilty CONVICT a moment would doze
> And oblivion his tortures appease,
> On the iron that galls him his limbs must repose
> In the damp-dropping vault of disease.

* See an article by R. A. Potts in *The Athenæum* for August 13, 1904.

RACEDOWN.

CHAPTER XIII

COLERIDGE

THE life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is hardly more remarkable for his genius than for the demonstrations of generosity which he evoked in other men. It would be unfair to insinuate that Cottle's practical advice and frequent loans were prompted solely by self-interest. If he took pains and even ran risks because he had faith in Coleridge's powers, one reason was that he "honoured verse." Although the natural differences of temperament between Coleridge and Southey, exasperated by their recent approximation, in having embarked upon the same mad project and married imprudently into the same family, had by 1796 resulted in coolness and dislike, Southey was still faithful to his ideal of Coleridge. One of the most satisfactory of these friendships, satisfactory because it gave equal delight and advantage to both parties and was preserved by a fine balance of mutual respect, was that between the poet and Thomas Poole. The story of their relations with each other has been charmingly recounted in Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," one of those biographies for which people who have passed the meridian of life forsake fiction without a sigh or a sense of loss.

Poole came to Coleridge's aid at a very critical moment. The scheme of emigration had fallen through. Southey had perceived how unpractical it was, and though his loyal nature compelled him to fulfil his engagement to Miss Edith Fricker, he had bidden her farewell at the church door after their marriage and had gone to Portugal. When he returned, in

the summer of 1796, the project seemed to him wilder than ever. Nor did Lovell, who had married Mary Fricker, care to revive it. Coleridge, who had married their sister Sara Fricker, perhaps as much out of Pantisocratic enthusiasm as for love, felt woefully deceived in the loss of his romantic hopes. He had nerved himself for a great adventure, of which only the first step had been taken, and that irretrievable. As a preacher and lecturer, he had not been very successful. He had not kept appointments with his audiences or with his own soul. His friends tried to hold him to his dates, but no power on earth could make his pen catch up with his thoughts. A project for serving as tutor in a rich family near Derby had failed. His magazine, *The Watchman*, had come to an end after the tenth number, on May 13, 1796. His first child, Hartley, was born September 19. On the same day, however, he took up the intellectual guardianship of Charles Lloyd, a young poet, the son of a rich Quaker of Birmingham, who for nearly a year was to live with him constantly. But even with what he earned in this way and by occasional contributions to London newspapers, Coleridge was submerged in poverty. Cottle and other friends made occasional offerings, which were gratefully accepted. Superiority to trifles, either favourable or unfavourable, is a form of magnanimity, and the great soul of Coleridge shines almost unclouded in his poems written during this nerve-racking time. Not the least of his titles to our love is his entire freedom from the vanity of authorship. He, who had written the "Poems on Various Subjects," published by Cottle, in April, 1796, could be so self-forgetful as to append this note to the "Lines Written at Shurton Bars": "The expression 'green radiance' is borrowed from Mr. Wordsworth, a poet whose versification is occasionally harsh and his diction too frequently obscure; but whom I deem unrivalled among the writers of the present day in manly sentiment, novel imagery, and vivid colouring."

He desired to find a cottage in the country, where

he could live more cheaply and with fewer interruptions than in Bristol, taking with him his wife and child and his disciple Charles Lloyd.* To his other troubles was now, towards the close of 1796, added, the demon Neuralgia. To combat this he unsuspectingly admitted a more terrible demon, Opium, and between the two his distraction was complete. For peace he turned to Thomas Poole. This young man, who was seven years his senior, lived in the village of Nether Stowey, about thirty miles from Bristol. One day in August, 1794, Poole had brought two strangers to call at the house of his uncle, who lived in the neighbouring hamlet of Upper Stowey. His cousin John, who was fresh from Oxford, and kept a diary in Latin, recorded his impressions, which Mrs. Sandford has thus translated:†

"About one o'clock Thomas Poole and his brother Richard, Henry Poole, and two young men, friends of his, come in. These two strangers, I understand, had left Cambridge, and had walked nearly all through Wales. One is an undergraduate of Oxford, the other of Cambridge. Each of them is shamefully hot with Democratic rage as regards politics, and both Infidel as to religion. I was extremely indignant. At last, however, about two o'clock, they all go away. . . . About seven o'clock Mr. Reekes comes from Stowey. He is very indignant over the odious and detestable ill-feeling of those two young men, whom he had met at my Uncle Thomas's. They seemed to have shown their sentiments more plainly there than with us. But enough of such matters!"

This is an interesting example of the kind of intercourse which railways and a profound change of manners have combined to render very rare. People were more approachable and more ready to discuss matters on which they disagreed, than is now generally the case. The strangers, of course, were Southey and Coleridge.

The acquaintance soon ripened into friendship. Coleridge, perhaps in connection with his preaching in the Unitarian chapel at Bridgwater, visited Poole in

* E. V. Lucas, "The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," Vol. VI., p. 100.
† Mrs. Sandford, "Thomas Poole and his Friends," Vol. I., p. 103.

September, 1795, as is thus recorded, in a diary kept by the latter's cousin Charlotte, under date of the 19th: "Tom Poole has a friend with him of the name of Coleridge: a young man of brilliant understanding, great eloquence, desperate fortune, democratick principles, and entirely led away by the feelings of the moment."

Three weeks later Poole wrote to Coleridge congratulating him on his marriage, and we see that he has already assumed the tone of counsellor and comforter. On the very day the last *Watchman* came out, Poole transmitted to the penniless and discouraged poet a considerable sum of money which he had collected as a testimonial, and sent with it a beautiful letter. That they agreed in politics is shown by Coleridge's remark in a letter to Poole, March 30, 1796, now in the British Museum: "Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord is as contemptible in style as in matter—it is sad stuff."

To Poole, then, Coleridge naturally turned at the end of the year, when illness and bad fortune drove him to seek another home. Poole, with proper caution, described the disadvantages of Nether Stowey and the cottage there on which Coleridge had set his heart; but the latter broke into such transports of despair that nothing more could be urged, and before January 1, 1797, he was settled, uncomfortably enough, in a mean little house beside the village street. Nether Stowey lies on the north-eastern slope of the Quantock Hills, eight or ten miles back from the Bristol Channel, and may have to-day a population of six or seven hundred. In Thomas Poole's time it was smaller. It is built in the form of the letter **Y**. Poole's house, which was one of the largest in the place, faced the left-hand street, which leads into the hills towards Upper Stowey. Its garden ran back almost to the garden of the Coleridge cottage, which faced the other branch. According to the poet's estimates, the accuracy of which my own observation leads me to doubt, he had an acre and a half of ground behind his cottage, where, before he had

been in the place three weeks, and in the depth of winter, he wrote: " I raise potatoes and all manner of vegetables; have an orchard, and shall raise corn (with the spade) enough for my family. We have two pigs, and ducks and geese. A cow would not answer to keep; for we have whatever milk we want from T. Poole." Not even the memorial tablet which now dignifies the little house can make it other than very plain. It stands elbow to elbow with other plain little houses. According to Mrs. Sandford, " in Coleridge's time it would seem to have consisted of two small and rather dark little parlours, one on each side of the front door, looking straight into the street, and a small kitchen behind, wholly destitute of modern conveniences, and where the fire was made on the hearth in the most primitive manner conceivable. There cannot have been more than three or, at most, four bedrooms above." But if his own quarters were cramped, Coleridge had an escape into the more spacious property of Poole, who had room enough and a well-chosen library. Nor was there a bigger heart in the world than Poole's. Poetry and politics were his intellectual passions. He had taught himself and had made others teach him Latin and French. He had reserved four or five hours of his busy day for reading.

Poole took a lively interest in the Revolution. His cousin Charlotte wrote of him in her diary: " I wish he would cease to torment us with his democratick sentiments; but he is never happy until the subject of politicks is introduced, and, as we all differ so much from him, we wish to have no conversation about it." He suffered some petty persecution for giving a copy of " The Rights of Man " to a cabinet-maker, and prevented the excited people of Stowey from burning Tom Paine in effigy. For some years he cherished the hope of making a journey of observation through the Western republic, and he treasured a lock of George Washington's hair which an American friend had given him. He wore his own hair without powder, as a sign of protest against the war-tax on that commodity.

Although he inherited considerable property, including a tan-yard, he spent some time as a journeyman tanner on the outskirts of London learning the mechanical details of his trade. He was an embodiment of practical good sense combined with theoretical ability. He wrote the article on Tanning for the third edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," introduced improved machinery, managed most of the public and philanthropic affairs of his neighbourhood, fought the slave-trade, helped to support Coleridge, and was the centre of the distinguished group who made the obscure hamlet of Nether Stowey for a time the intellectual capital of England. All these interests, too, he kept up without detriment to the energetic handling of a large private business.

Coleridge spent the first six months of 1797 at Nether Stowey revising his "Poems" for a second edition and writing his tragedy "Osorio." Charles Lloyd was intelligent, attractive, and devoted to his instructor, but extremely delicate. There was little gardening, after all. On Sundays Coleridge often walked to Bridgwater, eight miles away, or to Taunton, somewhat farther, to preach to the Unitarian congregations there. This sojourn was one of his few green isles "in the deep wide sea of misery." The outdoor life was good for his health. Poole's friendship comforted his soul. There was no immediate cause for alarm as to the hostile league of those "two giants, BREAD and CHEESE." His poetic vein was proving very rich. And best of all, he was getting out the ore. Altogether, we may treat ourselves to the thought that it was a right happy young man who, leaping over the gate at Racedown, ran across the triangular field to salute his brother poet. It is always a pleasure to think of Coleridge happy. And his best days henceforth are those spent in the society of William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

He no doubt gave them a most enthusiastic account of Nether Stowey. Poole, as we know, was built according to Wordsworth's ideal, an example of what an English farmer and artisan could become. His attainments,

Wordsworth thought, were, in kind at least, not beyond the reach of the better sort of Westmorland and Cumberland "statesmen." Coleridge, of course, described Poole. Probably, too, he dilated on the superior beauty of the scenery in Somerset. And it is true that the hills about Racedown are bleak compared with the richly-wooded heights and combes of the Quantocks, the landscape less open and cheerful, the general air of nature less warm and opulent. But more attractive than all his descriptions, there was Coleridge himself. Wordsworth had not hitherto been appreciated; Coleridge caught, interpreted, and approved his every expression. Wordsworth was still in rebellion against Church and State, and had been perhaps wondering in his seclusion whether, after all, there were any other young men quite so extreme as himself. Coleridge made no concealment of his own radical views, which he no doubt clothed with splendour and paraded with pomp. They were both Cambridge men, both poets—though undiscovered by a senseless world—and both writing tragedies. In Dorothy's heart the subtle instincts of pity and womanly solicitude were stirred. She penetrated their guest's disguise, and behind his gay and fluent speech detected his unrest, his anxiety, his self-reproach. At that moment began the long years wherein her first thought, next to William's welfare, ever was how to alleviate Coleridge's suffering.

J. Dykes Campbell, in his "Life of Coleridge," after reckoning that Coleridge in writing to Cottle of his intention to return to Stowey on Friday meant June 16, makes the rather surprising statement that if he carried out this plan "he must soon have gone back, for he appears to have arrived again at Stowey from Racedown on the 28th, and again on July 2, on the last occasion bringing with him the two Wordsworths on that famous visit to the Quantock country which was destined to be prolonged for a whole year." Nether Stowey is well over thirty miles from Racedown by the roads existing at that time. Coleridge himself gives the distance as forty miles. Yet such "post-haste

and rummage" would be quite in keeping with his character. Having tasted the sweets of companionship with the Wordsworths, he would think nothing of flying back to sip the nectar again and again. Still, it is not easy to find time for two more visits to Racedown after his returning to Nether Stowey on June 16. Campbell mentions as his authority "information from unpublished letters," given him by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. One of these letters was subsequently published by Mr. Coleridge,* and confirms only part of Campbell's statement. In it Coleridge says: "I had been on a visit to Wordsworth's at Racedown, near Crewkerne, and I brought him and his sister back with me, and here I have *settled them*." It is not unlikely that between June 16 and July 2, Wordsworth walked over with Coleridge from Racedown, was captivated by the beauty of the Quantocks, and learned that a good house could be rented on extremely easy terms not far from Coleridge, to whom by this time he was already deeply attached. At any rate, he and his sister came to Nether Stowey on July 2, 1797, apparently with no intention of returning to Dorsetshire.

On this occasion Coleridge drove and Dorothy sat beside him. No doubt they brought the few articles which constituted the Wordsworths' slight *impedimenta*, and of course five-year-old Basil. Coleridge referred to this exploit as proof of his ability to drive a one-horse chaise. The roads, he told Southey, were execrable. This journey was a fitting close to a month of intermittent and enthusiastic talk, of thrilling discoveries, of frank disclosures. Their acquaintance ripened quickly into a relation for which even "friendship" is too cold a word. The anxieties, the sorrows of Dorothy Wordsworth's life, and perhaps, too, her intensest joys, dated from that happy time. "My sister," he calls her after that, and she was brave enough to remain on that footing through the years to come. We have seen how unrestrained she was in expressing her love for William.

* To Robert Southey, July, 1797, in "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," Vol. I., p. 221.

To this other love she grants no stronger phrase than "dear Col." Not until her mind gave way beneath the load of sympathy and suppressed emotion, and the light of her glad youth darkened down to premature old age, did those about her half understand. "Her health broken by long walks," indeed! Why keep up this fiction, when the truth but testifies to the fulness of her womanly nature and adds a crowning touch to the beauty of her character? She loved Coleridge, and was able, through long years, not of mere silence and withdrawal, but of close intimacy, to transmute her love into helpfulness, forgetting self and reverencing every obligation. Did she perchance strengthen her soul, in moments of extreme trial, with Godwin's law that "man has no rights, but only duties"? The story of Dorothy Wordsworth is the tenderest, the purest, the most sacred page in the annals of poetry. "She never told her love," but her sweet innocency never taught her to practise concealment of it; so that even those who knew her well were deceived by her frankness into a belief that she really felt towards Coleridge only a sisterly solicitude and the affection of an old comrade.

The Wordsworths, not to mention Basil—whom at this juncture nobody mentions—appear to have been crowded somehow into that little house in Nether Stowey, with Coleridge and Mrs. Coleridge, and Hartley the baby, and Nanny the maid ("simple of heart, physiognomically handsome, and scientific in vaccimulgence"), and to have stayed there the two weeks beginning with July 2. Coleridge writes to Cottle:*

"STOWEY, 1797.

"Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind, I mean, and heart; for her person is such, that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her rather ordinary; if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion, her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say,

Guilt was a thing impossible in her.

* Cottle's "Reminiscences," p. 144.

Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste, a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties, and most recondite faults. She and W. desire their kindest regards to you.—Your ever affectionate friend, S. T. C."

As if it were not an amazing enough coincidence that three persons of genius should be sheltered under one mean roof, who should arrive from London but Charles Lamb! Lloyd, be it observed, had had several attacks of melancholia, and was no longer living at Nether Stowey. It was less than a year since the terrible day when Lamb's dear sister Mary, in a fit of insanity, killed her mother, September 22, 1796. Coleridge had for some time been trying to persuade his old schoolfellow to visit him, and, apparently without knowing that the Wordsworths were there, Lamb at last consented to come to Nether Stowey. He arrived on July 7, and stayed until the 14th. In the letter to Southey already cited, Coleridge writes:

"Charles Lamb has been with me for a week. He left me Friday morning. The second day after Wordsworth came to me, dear Sara accidently emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot, which confined me during the whole time of C. Lamb's stay, and still prevents me from all *walks* longer than a furlong. While Wordsworth, his sister, and Charles Lamb were out one evening, sitting in the arbour of T. Poole's garden, which communicates with mine, I composed these lines, with which I am pleased."

Here he inserts the earliest extant and no doubt original draft of his delightful poem, "This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," one of the sweetest and most tranquil of his compositions. Twice in these lines appears the expression, "my Sister and my Friends." In a copy which he wrote for Lloyd, who had not met the Wordsworths, and could better picture the scene without them, he changed this to "my Sara and my friend," and in the printed version, which he prepared after his sad estrangement from Wordsworth, he altered it to "my

gentle-hearted Charles." In the prefatory note, beginning " In the June of 1797 some long-expected friends paid a visit to the author's cottage," he named the month incorrectly.

It was an extraordinary company that strolled back and forth between Poole's house and the cottage, and climbed up to the ancient British camp above the village, and wandered through the wooded hills. Country people meeting them stared at their unconventional clothing, and commented on their apparent idleness. Coleridge himself was hardly yet an accepted figure, and all Tom Poole's old radicalism was remembered afresh. Even Mrs. Coleridge was not like other women. We think of her too exclusively as a careworn mother, much concerned with household economy, and are inclined to forget that she married with the expectation of becoming a Pantisocrat and leading a very different sort of life from most women. Moreover, she too wrote verses. The other three were extraordinary-looking persons. William was tall and gaunt, with a peculiar nervous smile that played about the corners of his mouth. He wore his hair long, straight, and unpowdered, like a Jacobin. Charles Lamb was only twenty-two, and delighted in mystifying people. He and Dorothy, with their dark skin and roving eyes, had a foreign air. They looked enough alike to be members of the same gipsy band.

It is probable that they all, in spite of Coleridge's scalded foot, managed to inspect the property which it was planned that Wordsworth should rent. Lamb reproached himself with being a rather silent guest. There was much talk, and Coleridge, beyond question, did his share; but Lamb can hardly have deserved his own censure. They were entertained at Poole's, and one or two other houses. On his return to London, Lamb wrote to his host:

" I feel improvement in the recollection of many a casual conversation. The names of Tom Poole, of Wordsworth and his good sister, with thine and Sara's, are become ' familiar in my mouth as household words.'

You would make me very happy, if you think W. has no objection, by transcribing for me that inscription of his. I have some scattered sentences ever floating on my memory, teasing me that I cannot remember more of it."

This must refer to the " Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree."

A pretty clear trace of these conversations remains in a few sentences of that letter from Coleridge to Southey which I have already quoted, and which was written just after Lamb's departure, and we can see in them the print of Wordsworth's mind. They are perhaps the earliest witnesses to that understanding between Wordsworth and Coleridge on the subject of poetic diction which resulted in " Lyrical Ballads " and the critical works growing out of that venture.

" A young man," he writes, " by strong feelings is impelled to write on a particular subject, and this is all his feelings do for him. They set him upon the business and then they leave him. He has such a high idea of what poetry ought to be, that he cannot conceive that such things as his natural emotions may be allowed to find a place in it; his learning therefore, his fancy, or rather conceit, and all his powers of buckram are put on the stretch."

It must have been Wordsworth's natural gifts that won Coleridge's admiration; certainly not his learning. The plastic mind of Coleridge respected his guest's superior power of self-determination, and above all, perhaps, the quality of spirit which made him regard his natural emotions with so much reverence that to dress them in buckram would have been impossible. " Wordsworth is a very great man," wrote Coleridge to Southey in this same letter; " the only man to whom *at all times* and *in all modes of excellence* I feel myself inferior."

Alfoxden is a long, low, and very beautiful country-house, about four miles north-west of Nether Stowey. It is surrounded by a romantic park, heavily wooded with noble oaks and beeches, which extends far back

into the Quantock Hills. The road from Bridgwater and Stowey passes below the house at the foot of a broad lawn to the little village of Holford. The brown waters of the Bristol Channel bound the view on the north-east. After the plainness, not to say dreariness, of Nether Stowey, and the strictly agricultural character of all the country which a traveller from Bridgwater sees from the road, Alfoxden has a somewhat grand, though genial air. It is much larger than Rydal Mount. Miss Wordsworth was not exaggerating when she called it a mansion. Seventy head of deer fed in the glades around it, and their descendants give life to the park now. The place has a warm and open look, very different from that of Racedown. But it has been described by an inimitable pen. Miss Wordsworth and her brother found their way into the park before they had been two days at Nether Stowey, and she wrote on July 4:*

"There is everything there; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic; and William and I, in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell formed by steep hills covered with full-grown timber-trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic; it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighbourhood of the lakes."

On August 14, writing to the same correspondent, and now from Alfoxden itself, she says:

"The evening that I wrote to you, William and I had rambled as far as this house, and pryed into the recesses of our little brook, but without any more fixed thoughts upon it than some dreams of happiness in a little cottage and passing wishes that such a place might be found out. We spent a fortnight at Coleridge's: in the course of that time we heard that this house was to let, applied for it, and took it. Our principal inducement was Coleridge's society. It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden.

"The house is a large mansion, with furniture enough for a dozen families like ours. There is a very excellent garden, well stocked with vegetables and fruit. The

* "Memoirs," I. 102. Bishop Wordsworth does not give the name of Dorothy's correspondent.

garden is at the end of the house, and our favourite parlour, as at Racedown, looks that way. In front is a little court, with grass plot, gravel walk, and shrubs; the moss roses were in full beauty a month ago. The front of the house is to the south, but it is screened from the sun by a high hill which rises immediately from it. This hill is beautiful, scattered irregularly and abundantly with trees, and topped with fern, which spreads a considerable way down it. The deer dwell here, and sheep, so that we have a living prospect. From the end of the house we have a view of the sea, over a woody meadow-country; and exactly opposite the window where I now sit is an immense wood, whose round top from this point has exactly the appearance of a mighty dome. In some parts of this wood there is an under grove of hollies which are now very beautiful. In a glen at the bottom of the wood is the waterfall of which I spoke, a quarter of a mile from the house. We are three miles from Stowey, and not two miles from the sea. Wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys with small brooks running down them, through green meadows, hardly ever intercepted with hedgerows, but scattered over with trees. The hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and billberries or oak woods, which are cut for charcoal. . . . Walks extend for miles over the hill-tops; the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity: they are perfectly smooth, without rocks. The Tor of Glastonbury is before our eyes during more than half of our walk to Stowey; and in the park wherever we go, keeping about fifteen yards above the house, it makes a part of our prospect."

Alfoxden belonged to a family named St. Albyn. A lease of the property, including house, furniture, gardens, stables, and coach-house, was signed July 14 by their tenant, John Bartholomew, and William Wordsworth, and witnessed by Thomas Poole, the rental being only twenty-three pounds, for one year, Bartholomew to pay all rates and taxes, and keep the premises in good tenantable repair.* Mrs. Sandford conjectures that

* Mrs. Sandford, "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 225. The original agreement is in the British Museum, and reads as follows:

"Mem. of agreement made this 14th day of July 1797 between John Bartholemew and Wm. Wordsworth—that is to say, the said John Bartholo-

this merely nominal price was due to the fact that the sole object of letting the place at all was to keep the house inhabited during the owner's minority. It may be remarked also that the war had seriously checked the prosperity of the country, and many great families were glad to get anything for their country-seats.

From the letters just quoted, it might seem that when the Wordsworths came to visit Coleridge, they did not dream of renting Alfoxden; yet they appear to have come away from Racedown with bag and baggage, for they took possession of their new place at once. When Miss Wordsworth wrote, "It was a month yesterday since we came to Alfoxden," she probably meant four weeks, which would be July 16. Lamb left Nether Stowey July 14. Poole, of course, was active in securing Alfoxden for Wordsworth. It was probably in the interval between July 14 and 17 that Coleridge wrote to Poole (manuscript in the British Museum): "I pray you come over if possible by eleven o'clock that we may have Wordsworth's Tragedy read under the trees."

Immediately after Lamb's departure he was succeeded at Nether Stowey by another invited guest. This was John Thelwall, the political agitator, with whom Coleridge had for some months been in frequent correspondence. Coming to Coleridge's house late on July 17, he found that his host was spending the night at Alfoxden. The necessity of "superintending the wash-tub"

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mew agrees to let to the said Wm. Wordsworth, Allfoxen House, Furniture, Gardens, Stables, and Coach-house, etc., and to put him in immediate possession of the same, to hold the same for one year from midsummer last at the rent of twenty-three pounds, the said John Bartholemew to discharge every rate and tax whatever, and to keep the premises in good tenantable repair; and the said Wm. Wordsworth agrees, in case he quits the house, etc., at the end of the year, to give the said John Bartholemew three months notice of the same; and it is further agreed that in case the said Wm. Wordsworth retains the house, etc., beyond the present year, he shall be allowed by the said John Bartholemew out of the rent of twenty-three pounds any diminution he might cause in the present assessed taxes.

"As witness our hands,

"JOHN BARTHOLEMEW.

"WM. WORDSWORTH."

"Witness, THOS. POOLE."

had brought Mrs. Coleridge home, but next morning she and Thelwall hastened over to Alfoxden, four miles away, in time, as we are told, "to call Samuel and his friend Wordsworth up to breakfast."* Thus began a day which must have remained bright in Thelwall's memory for ever. "We are a most philosophical party," he declared, "the enthusiastic group consisting of C. and his Sara, W. and his sister, and myself, without any servant, male or female." They rambled through the grounds, exploring its woods and its romantic dell. They "passed sentence on the productions and characters of the age," and gave full vent to their enthusiasm in poetical and philosophic flights. "Citizen John," cried Coleridge, as they gazed at the water tumbling in its dim recess, "this is a fine place to talk treason in." "Nay! Citizen Samuel," rejoined the tired fighter, "it is rather a place to make a man forget that there is any necessity for treason."†

Though this appears to have been their first meeting, Coleridge and Thelwall had been in correspondence for over a year. In December, 1796, Coleridge had written: "Though *personally* unknown, I really love you, and can count but few human beings whose hand I would welcome with a more hearty grasp of friendship." There is in the British Museum a letter from Thelwall to Coleridge, May 10, 1796, mentioning previous correspondence between them, and referring to a sonnet by Coleridge in Thelwall's honour, containing the words: "Thou, mid thickest fire, Leap'st on the perilous wall."

The person thus esteemed by Coleridge was about

* Letter from Thelwall to his wife, dated Alfoxden, July 18, 1797. See Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 232.

† Coleridge's "Table Talk," July 26, 1830. Wordsworth's version of this little incident, as recorded in the Fenwick note to his "Anecdote for Fathers," is characteristic of the way in which, in the latter part of his life, he made light of his early connection with radicals like Thelwall: "I remember once when Coleridge, he, and I were seated together upon the turf, on the brink of a stream in the most beautiful part of the most beautiful glen of Alfoxden, Coleridge exclaimed: 'This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world.' 'Nay,' said Thelwall, 'to make one forget them altogether.'" Who can doubt that Coleridge has reported the words correctly?

eight years his senior, a self-made man, who during a youth of poverty, in which he tried several occupations, never ceased to read and to practise composition. He was deeply affected by the French Revolution. He perceived its social significance. As M. Charles Cestre has well said:* " He played a prominent part in the first democratic agitation in England, gained great ascendancy over the more educated elements of the labouring class, and cannot but have been powerfully instrumental in awakening the lower orders to the consciousness of their opportunities."

In the height of the reactionary panic in May, 1794, Thelwall was arrested, his house was searched, his library was taken from him and never restored, his writings were scattered, and he was committed to await trial on the flimsiest of testimony.†

He lay for five months untried in the Tower, and for one month in Newgate prison, " in the dead-hole, or charnel-house, where the corpses of such prisoners as died of diseases were placed before the burial."‡

In spite of the desperate and contemptible measures taken by Government to procure conviction, Thelwall, like Hardy, was acquitted of the charge of high treason. His sufferings only increased his zeal, and on his release, as he was not allowed to speak in public places, he fitted up a lecture-room of his own, where he spoke twice a week to large audiences, expounding the philosophy of the Revolution, and pleading such causes as electoral reform and liberty of assembly. He published his lectures in a periodical, *The Tribune*, which he owned and edited. After the great mass-meeting of

* " John Thelwall: a Pioneer of Democracy and Social Reform in England during the French Revolution," p. 13. London, 1906.

† Thelwall says: " Every manuscript was seized, upon whatever subject—Poems, Novels, Dramas, Literary and Philosophical Dissertations—all the unfinished labours of ten years' application. Successful or abortive, it matters not; they were the fruits, the creations of my own industry, and therefore were more *absolutely my property* than the estate of the landed gentleman or the stock-in-trade of the manufacturer. Whether they are worth *sixpence* or *six thousand pounds* is of no consequence." See Vol. I., p. 90, of *The Tribune*, London, 1795.

‡ " Cestre," p. 95.

December 7, 1795, in Marylebone Fields, the Government renewed its pressure, his supporters fell away, and he was obliged to give up lecturing. *The Tribune* was suppressed in April, 1796, but Thelwall continued publishing his doctrines in pamphlets until the close of the year. He earned a precarious living, and managed to continue his political propaganda, by lecturing in many parts of the country on subjects not immediately revolutionary, such as Roman history. But his activities became more and more difficult and unprofitable as the rising war-passion swept men and parties into the Tory ranks. He was frequently mobbed, and the magistrates of some of the towns where he spoke refused to give him protection. He had few friends left except Coleridge. He was attracted to the latter not only personally, but for the rather amusing reason that he conceived of him as one who had found a way to combine intellectual freedom with agricultural success. Coleridge, on the other hand, was interested in Thelwall, not only as a talented and brave revolutionist, but as an atheist, who might be converted to more moderate religious views.*

Coleridge charged his correspondent with "anti-religious bigotry." To a man of his argumentative disposition, the task of converting such a person was very alluring. He himself could so easily see many sides to all great philosophical questions, that the simple dogmatic Thelwall must have seemed to him a mere child. He had not found it easy to alter the mood of his other new-found friend, Wordsworth, whom he termed "a semi-atheist." He was proud of having won Charles Lloyd "to a conviction of the truth of Christianity, . . . for he had been, if not a deist, yet quite a sceptic."† The half-dozen letters in which he poured out his heart to Thelwall before ever meeting him are among the liveliest and most affectionate Coleridge ever wrote. Small

* See the letter from Coleridge to Thelwall, May 13, 1796, in "Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," edited by E. H. Coleridge, Vol. I., p. 159.

† "Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," edited by E. H. Coleridge, Vol. I., p. 170.

wonder that the persecuted and discouraged agitator sought at last to enjoy his presence, and see if there was any chance of settling in his neighbourhood.

The world has long ago forgotten, if it ever indeed admitted, that Thelwall was a poet. Yet he was the author of much verse. Its quality is below mediocrity. But the subjects he chose and the nature of his attempt are not without significance to a student of Wordsworth, as M. Cestre has shown. The plan of Thelwall's "Peripatetic" is similar in its mechanism to that of "The Excursion," and it is perhaps not too fanciful to think that in "Michael" we have a reminiscence of Thelwall's poem, "On Leaving the Bottoms of Gloucestershire, August, 1797," in which he thus describes the cottages of weavers:

> Industry,
> Even from the dawning to the western ray,
> And oft by midnight taper, patient plies
> Her task assiduous; and the day with songs,
> The night with many an earth-star, far descried,
> By the lone traveller, cheers amid her toil.

Thelwall and Wordsworth agreed perfectly in their opposition to war and their belief that the poor of England were oppressed. Thelwall was one of the first observers to sound a warning against the dangers of the industrial movement just beginning, which tended to attract the population into large centres and to exploit children's labour. He raised his voice against

> the unwieldy pride
> Of Factory overgrown, when Opulence,
> Dispeopling the neat cottage, crowds his walls
> (Made pestilent by congregated lungs
> And lewd association) with a race
> Of infant slaves, brok'n timely to the yoke
> Of unremitting drudgery.

All that rendered Thelwall interesting to Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Thomas Poole, made him an object of horror to other people in the Stowey neighbourhood. Poole's cousin Charlotte wrote in her diary:*

* Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 235.

"*July* 23, 1797.—We are shocked to hear that Mr. Thelwall has spent some time at Stowey this week with Mr. Coleridge, and consequently with Tom Poole. Alfoxton House is taken by one of the fraternity, and Woodlands by another. To what are we coming?"

The chief offender had left Nether Stowey by July 27, for on that date, being his birthday, he wrote some verses at the neighbouring town of Bridgwater. They were composed, as their title informs us, "during a long Excursion in quest of a peaceful Retreat," and contain a pathetic expression of hope that the recent pleasant days may sometime be renewed:

> Ah! 'twould be sweet, beneath the neighb'ring thatch,
> In philosophic amity to dwell,
> Inditing moral verse, or tale, or theme,
> Gay or instructive; and it would be sweet
> With kindly interchange of mutual aid
> To delve our little garden plots, the while
> Sweet converse flow'd, suspending oft the arm
> And half-driven spade, while, eager, one propounds,
> And listens one, weighing each pregnant word,
> And pondering fit reply, that may untwist
> The knolly point—perchance, of import high—
> Of moral Truth, of Causes infinite,
> Created Power, or uncreated Worlds
> Eternal and uncaus'd! or whatsoe'er
> Of Metaphysic, or of Ethic Lore,
> The Mind, with curious subtlety, pursues—
> Agreeing or dissenting—sweet alike,
> When wisdom, and not Victory, the end. . . .

There is a letter from Coleridge to John Chubb, of Bridgwater, written in 1797 or 1798,* on the subject of Thelwall's difficulty in finding a place where he could live unmolested. Mr. Chubb, who appears to have been an estate-agent, is urged to find a cottage for Thelwall somewhere within five or six miles of Stowey.

"He has found by experience," writes the sympathetic poet, "that neither his own health or that of his wife and children can be preserved in London; and were it otherwise, yet his income is inadequate to maintain him

* Printed by J. L. Hammond in his "C. J. Fox, a Political Study," p. 121, note.

there. He is therefore under the necessity of fixing his residence in the country. But, by his particular exertions in the propagation of those principles which we hold sacred and of the highest importance, he has become, as you well know, particularly unpopular, through every part of the kingdom—in every part of the kingdom, therefore, some odium and inconvenience must be incurred by those who should be instrumental in procuring him a cottage there—but are Truth and Liberty of so little importance that we owe no sacrifice to them?"

Thelwall desired to take a house at Nether Stowey, and settle there permanently with his wife and children, but Coleridge, in the autumn, warned him not to come. Without Poole's help it would be impossible, he says,* and "to such interference on his part there are insuperable difficulties." "The whole malignity of the Aristocrats," he continues, "will converge to him, as to one point. His tranquillity will be perpetually interrupted; his business and his credit hampered and distressed by vexatious calumnies; the ties of relationship weakened, perhaps broken; and, lastly, his poor old mother made miserable." Then from what follows we have the information that Wordsworth at the time of his coming had been regarded as a dangerous man:

"Very great odium Tom Poole incurred by bringing *me* here; my peaceable manners, and known attachment to Christianity, had almost worn it away, when Wordsworth came, and he, likewise by T. Poole's agency, settled here. You cannot conceive the tumult, calumnies, and apparatus of threatened persecutions, which the event has occasioned round about us. If *you*, too, should come, I am afraid that even riots, and dangerous riots, might be the consequence. Either of us separately would perhaps be tolerated; but *all three* together —what can it be less than plot and damned conspiracy?—a school for the propagation of Demagogy and Atheism?"

In another letter, of about the same time, he says:†

"I am sad at heart about you on many accounts, but chiefly anxious for this present business. The aristo-

* Mrs. Sandford, 'Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 237.

† "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," edited by E. H. Coleridge, I. 232.

crats seem to persecute *even Wordsworth*. But we will at least not yield without a struggle; and if I cannot get you near me, it shall not be for want of a trial on my part."

We have here a reference to a fact which gives one some idea of the state of the public mind. Coleridge, unsupported by other testimony, might be suspected of exaggerating very mild alarms into something more considerable. But it is known that someone in the neighbourhood sent word to the authorities that disaffected persons were gathering about Nether Stowey, and a Government spy was sent down to observe them. Mrs. St. Albyn, the mother of the heir to Alfoxden, was invoked to look into Wordsworth's case. She reprimanded her tenant or agent, Bartholomew, for having let the house to him, and notice was given the poet to quit the place on the expiration of his term, which would be the next June. Poole, who had to bear the responsibility, shouldered his part of the blame right manfully, and wrote a letter of explanation to the incensed "aristocrat," but in vain. The important parts of his letter to Mrs. St. Albyn are as follows:

"MADAM,—I have heard that Mr. Bartholomew of Putsham has incurred your displeasure by letting Allfoxen House to Mr. Wordsworth. As it was through me that Mr. Wordsworth was introduced to Mr. Bartholomew as a tenant, I take the liberty of addressing to you this letter, simply to state the circumstances attending the business, and to say a few words for Mr. Wordsworth and his connections. . . . As for Mr. Wordsworth, I believe him to be in every respect a gentleman. I have not known him personally long, but I had heard of his family before I knew him. Dr. Fisher, our late Vicar, and one of the Canons of Windsor, had often mentioned to me, as his particular and respected friend, Mr. Cookson, Mr. Wordsworth's uncle, and also one of the Canons of Windsor. This circumstance was sufficient to convince me of the respectability of Mr. Wordsworth's family. You may, upon my honour, rest assured that no tenant could have been found for Allfoxen whom, if you knew him, you would prefer to Mr. Wordsworth. His family is small, consisting of his sister, who has principally lived with her uncle, Mr. Cookson, a child

of five years old, the son of a friend of his, and one excellent female servant. . . . But I am informed you have heard that Mr. Wordsworth does keep company, and on this head I fear the most infamous falsehoods have reached your ears. Mr. Wordsworth is a man fond of retirement—fond of reading and writing—and has never had above two gentlemen at a time with him. By accident Mr. Thelwall, as he was travelling through the neighbourhood, called at Stowey. The person he called on at Stowey took him to Allfoxen. No person at Stowey nor Mr. Wordsworth knew of his coming. Mr. Wordsworth had never spoken to him before, nor, indeed, had anyone of Stowey. Surely the common duties of hospitality were not to be refused to any man; and who would not be interested in seeing such a man as Thelwall, however they may disapprove of his sentiments or conduct? God knows we are all liable to err, and should bear with patience the difference in one another's opinions. Be assured, and I speak it from my own knowledge, that Mr. Wordsworth, of all men alive, is the last who will give anyone cause to complain of his opinions, his conduct, or his disturbing the peace of anyone. Let me beg you, madam, to hearken to no calumnies, no party spirit, nor to join with any in disturbing one who only wishes to live in tranquillity. I will pledge myself in every respect that you will have no cause to complain of Mr. Wordsworth. You have known me from my youth, and know my family—I should not risk my credit with you in saying what I could not answer for.—Believe me, with sincere respect, your very obedient and obliged—THOMAS POOLE.

"*September* 16, 1797."*

Mrs. Sandford tells a curious anecdote about Poole's cousins at Upper Stowey:

"Once Tom Poole, being there with his friends, begged Penelope to sing 'Come, ever-smiling Liberty!' ('Judas Maccabæus') for Coleridge and Wordsworth. Many years afterwards she related the circumstance to her daughter, and told how she persistently selected another song. 'I could not sing it,' she said; 'I knew what they meant by *their* liberty.'"

* The rough draft of this letter is in the British Museum, and shows by its many erasures and corrections that Poole felt he was undertaking a very delicate mission.

A spy could hardly have come into this extremely patriotic neighbourhood without his business being discovered, and there can be no doubt that a spy came to observe the friends. Probably much wise advice was offered in this case by ignorant villagers puzzled by the unconventional dress and manner of the strangers, and by officious persons who felt that they owed it to the country to see that no Jacobins were tolerated in Somerset. These petty persecutions, and especially the descent and discomfiture of the spy, must have amused the two poets, and added a delightful spice of romance to their daily walks. We must remember how young they were. Coleridge could not refrain from telling the story with mock-solemn detail, in the midst of a very serious part of "Biographia Literaria." The opening chapters of that work were written in 1815, when he was subject to a mood of reconcilement and reaction. He interrupts his eulogy of Burke to build the following narrative, which was at least based on fact, though gay exaggeration laughs from every word:

"In addition to the gentleman, my neighbour, whose garden joined on to my little orchard, and the cultivation of whose friendship had been my sole motive in choosing Stowey for my residence, I was so fortunate as to acquire, shortly after my settlement there, an invaluable blessing in the society and neighbourhood of one to whom I could look up with equal reverence, whether I regarded him as a poet, a philosopher, or a man. His conversation extended to almost all subjects, except physics and politics; with the latter he never troubled himself. Yet neither my retirement nor my utter abstraction from all the disputes of the day could secure me in those jealous times from suspicion and obloquy, which did not stop at me, but extended to my excellent friend, whose perfect innocence was even abused as a proof of his guilt. One of the many busy *sycophants* of that day (I here use the word sycophant in its original sense, as a wretch who *flatters* the prevailing party by *informing* against his neighbours, under pretence that they are exporters of prohibited *figs* or fancies! for the moral application of the term it matters not which)—one of these sycophantic lawmongrels, discoursing on the *politics* of the neighbour-

hood, uttered the following *deep* remark: ' As to *Coleridge*, there is not so much harm in *him*, for he is a whirlbrain that talks whatever comes uppermost; but that—— ! He is the *dark* traitor. *You never heard HIM say a syllable on the subject.*' . . .

" The dark guesses of some zealous quidnunc met with so congenial a soil in the grave alarm of a titled Dogberry of our neighbourhood, that a SPY was actually sent down from the Government *pour surveillance* of myself and friend. There must have been not only abundance, but *variety*, of these honourable men at the disposal of Ministers; for this proved a very honest fellow. After three weeks' truly Indian perseverance in tracking us (for we were commonly together), during all which time seldom were we out of doors, but he contrived to be within hearing (and all the time utterly unsuspected: how, indeed, could such a suspicion enter our fancies?), he not only rejected Sir Dogberry's request that he would try yet a little longer, but declared to him his belief, that both my friend and myself were as good subjects, for aught he could discover to the contrary, as any in His Majesty's dominions. He had repeatedly hid himself, he said, for hours together, behind a bank at the seaside (our favourite seat), and overheard our conversation. At first he fancied that we were aware of our danger; for he often heard me talk of one *Spy Nozy*, which he was inclined to interpret of himself, and of a remarkable feature belonging to him; but he was speedily convinced that it was a man who had made a book, and lived long ago. Our talk ran most upon books, and we were perpetually desiring each other to look at *this*, and to listen to *that;* but he could not catch a word about politics. Once he had joined me on the road (this occurred as I was returning home alone from my friend's house, which was about three miles from my own cottage); and passing himself off as a traveller, he had entered into conversation with me, and talked, of purpose, in a democrat way, in order to draw me out. The result, it appears, not only convinced him that I was no friend of Jacobinism, but (he added) I had ' plainly made it out to be such a silly as well as wicked thing, that he felt ashamed, though he had only *put it on*.' "

This whole matter has sometimes been scoffingly dismissed as nonsense, and Wordsworth later in life tried

to give the impression that there was nothing in it. There is confirmation of the story, however, from an independent source in Eliza Meteyard's statement (p. 78 of "A Group of Englishmen"): "Sir Philip Hale, of Cannington [a village between Nether Stowey and Bridgwater], gave notice to the Government that some very suspicious persons had congregated in their neighbourhood. A spy was therefore sent down, and his report was that Coleridge might be harmless, but that Wordsworth was suspicious."

Wordsworth, in the Fenwick note to "Anecdote for Fathers," after referring rather apologetically to his acquaintance with Thelwall, says: "The visit of this man to Coleridge was, as I believe Coleridge has related, the occasion of a spy being sent by Government to watch our proceedings, which were, I can say with truth, such as the world at large would have thought ludicrously harmless." He gave to the composition of this poem the date 1798, and told Miss Fenwick

"the name of Liswyn Farm was taken from a beautiful spot on the Wye,* where Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and I, had been visiting the famous John Thelwall, who had taken refuge from politics, after a trial for high treason, with a view to bring up his family by the profits of agriculture, which proved as unfortunate a speculation as that he had fled from. Coleridge and he had both been public lecturers; Coleridge mingling with his politics Theology, from which the other elocutionist abstained, unless it was for the sake of a sneer. This quondam community of public employment induced Thelwall to visit Coleridge at Nether Stowey, where he fell in my way. He really was a man of extraordinary talent, an affectionate husband, and a good father. Though brought up in the city, on a tailor's board, he was truly sensible of the beauty of natural objects."

It is likely that Wordsworth's attitude toward Thelwall in 1797 was by no means so detached and superior as he wished to make it appear when he dictated

* Apparently he had forgotten that Thelwall's farm was not on the Wye, but near Brecon, in Wales, a day's walk from the Wye.

this note. Coleridge, writing to a friend, says:* "John Thelwall is a very warm-hearted, honest man; and disagreeing as we do, on almost every point of religion, of morals, of politics, and philosophy, we like each other uncommonly well. He is a great favourite with Sara."

A letter from Coleridge to Cottle,† undated, but evidently written in the spring or early summer of 1798, shows in the following passage that the distrust of Wordsworth continued throughout the entire time of his residence in Somersetshire, and that Mrs. St. Albyn did not relent:

"Wordsworth has been caballed against *so long and so loudly* that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Allfoxden estate, to let him keep the house, after their first agreement is expired, so he must quit it at Midsummer; whether we shall be able to procure him a house and furniture near Stowey, we know not, and yet we must: for the hills, and the woods, and the streams, and the sea, and the shores, would break forth into reproaches against us, if we did not strain every nerve, to keep their Poet among them. Without joking, and in serious sadness, Poole and I cannot endure to think of losing him."‡

Cottle treats us to an anecdote§ which from its flavour evidently passed through the hands of Coleridge: "The wiseacres of the village had, it seems, made Mr. W. the subject of their serious conversation. One said that 'he had seen him wander about by night, and look

* Cottle's "Early Recollections," I. 254. † *Ibid.*, 313.

‡ Knight makes the statement ("Life of Wordsworth," I. 146) that the poet wrote on the margin of a memoir of himself, compiled by Barron Field, and never printed, opposite a statement that his removal from Alfoxden was occasioned by "caballing long and loud": "A mistake. *Not the occasion* of my removal. Annoyances I had none. The facts mentioned by Coleridge of a spy, etc., came not to my knowledge till I had left the neighbourhood. I was not refused a continuance. I never applied for one." I have not seen the memoir to which Knight here refers. Certainly Wordsworth's recollection was at fault, as the letters and extracts given above from diaries in Mrs. Sandford's "Thomas Poole and his Friends" show, not to mention the testimony of Cottle, Coleridge, and Southey, and the manuscript of the draft of Poole's letter to Mrs. St. Albyn, which I have seen.

§ "Early Recollections," I. 319.

rather strangely at the moon! and then he roamed over the hills, like a partridge.' Another said, 'he had heard him mutter, as he walked, in some outlandish brogue, that nobody could understand!'" But here I am afraid the amiable Cottle becomes too garrulous to be quoted further. True or not, however, his account of how he and the poets tried to unharness a horse is worth repeating for two reasons: it is no exaggeration of their ignorance of worldly ways, and it shows how eager the author of "Alfred, an Epic Poem in Twenty-four Books," was to associate his name with the authors of the "Ancient Mariner" and "The Excursion":

"I removed the harness without difficulty, but, after many strenuous attempts, I could not get off the collar. In despair, I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr. W. first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but, after several unsuccessful efforts, he relinquished the achievement, as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but showed no more grooming skill than his predecessors; for after twisting the poor horse's neck, almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that 'the horse's head must have grown (gout or dropsy!) since the collar was put on! for,' he said, 'it was a downright impossibility for such a huge Os Frontis to pass through so narrow a collar!' Just at this instant the servant girl came near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, 'La, Master,' said she, 'you do not go about the work in the right way. You should do like this,' when, turning the collar completely upside down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment; each satisfied, afresh, that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained."

CHAPTER XIV

THREE PERSONS AND ONE SOUL

COLERIDGE was immensely benefited in spirits by Wordsworth's companionship, though he wrote to Cottle that in spite of his friend's conversation he was depressed, for he saw no way of earning Bread and Cheese. But he had a marvellous power of forgetting care, and several of his noble poems were conceived and partly executed in the next few months after Wordsworth came to Alfoxden. The bracing effect of Wordsworth's society is seen, too, in the consecutive toil which Coleridge bestowed upon his "Osorio," which probably represents more hard work than anything else he ever wrote. Sheridan had asked him to write a tragedy. The knowledge that Wordsworth was writing one encouraged him. Such progress was made that by September he had reached the middle of the fifth act,* and a month later it was finished and sent to the Drury Lane Theatre. It was rejected. In 1813, in a revised form and with a new title, "Remorse," it was successfully performed, and had a long run in London, besides being acted in the provinces.

Wordsworth was not much later than Coleridge in finishing his tragedy. The latter wrote to Cottle:

* "*September* 13, 1797.—Coleridge is gone over to Bowles with his Tragedy, which he has finished to the middle of the 5th Act. He set off a week ago."—A fragment of a letter from Wordsworth printed by Cottle. "Reminiscences," p. 133. Cottle also prints, without date, a letter from Coleridge to himself, in which the poet says: "My Tragedy employed and strained all my thoughts and faculties for six or seven months; Wordsworth consumed far more time, and far more thought, and far more genius"—*i.e.*, on "The Borderers." See Cottle's "Reminiscences," p. 176.

"I have procured for Wordsworth's tragedy an introduction to Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, who has promised to read it attentively and to give his answer immediately; and if he accepts it, to put it in preparation without an hour's delay."*

And on November 20 Dorothy Wordsworth writes:

"William's play is finished, and sent to the managers of the Covent Garden Theatre. We have not the faintest expectation that it will be accepted."

But undoubtedly they had some hopes, for they went to London, about the end of the month, and stayed three weeks. Bishop Wordsworth quotes from a letter she wrote at Bristol,† on the return journey, December 21:

"We have been in London: our business was the play; and the play is rejected. It was sent to one of the principal actors at Covent Garden, who expressed great approbation, and advised William strongly to go to London to make certain alterations."

The Bishop adds that the same letter expresses great sorrow and disappointment because Coleridge's play also was rejected. Wordsworth took his defeat philosophically. It stimulated him to greater exertions. He wrote in fine spirits to James Tobin, a brother of the dramatist, John Tobin:‡ "I am perfectly easy about the theatre; if I had no other means of employing myself, Mr. Lewis's success would have thrown me into despair." This refers to M. G. Lewis's flashy tragedy, "The Castle Spectre," which was having a profitable run in London.§

"There is little need," he continues, "to advise me against publishing; it is a thing which I dread as much as death itself. This may serve as an example of the figure by rhetoricians called hyperbole, but privacy and quiet are my delight. No doubt you have heard of the munificence of the Wedgwoods towards Coleridge. I hope the fruit will be good as the seed is noble. We leave Alfoxden at Midsummer. The house is let . . .

* "Reminiscences," p. 143. † "Memoirs," I. 115.
‡ "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 114. § See p. 348, note.

so our departure is decided. What may be our destination I cannot say. . . . We have no particular reason to be attached to the neighbourhood of Stowey, but the society of Coleridge and the friendship of Poole."

He laughingly mentions having written 1,300 lines of a poem in which he has contrived to convey most of the knowledge of which he is possessed, his object being "to give pictures of Nature, Man, and Society." He says that he has carved out work for at least a year and a half, and refers to essays "which must be written with eloquence, or not at all." This remark doubtless has some connection with his statement to Miss Fenwick, that while composing "The Borderers" he wrote "a short essay, illustrative of that constitution and those tendencies of human nature which make the apparently *motiveless* actions of bad men intelligible to careful observers." It is not known what became of this essay; and the project mentioned in the letter to Tobin was evidently not carried out. "My eloquence," Wordsworth says, "modestly speaking, will all be carried off, at least for some time, into my poem." He asks Tobin to collect books of travels for him, which are indispensable for his present labours, and he wishes to see "Mrs. Godwyn's Life." In Miss Wordsworth's Journal for April 14, we learn that "Mary Wollstonecraft's life, etc., came."

In 1836 Wordsworth affixed the date 1797 to "The Reverie of Poor Susan." A few years later he told Miss Fenwick that he wrote it in 1801 or 1802. It was, however, printed in 1800. Wordsworth often made mistakes of this kind, but we can generally rely with perfect confidence upon his recollection of the moods in which he composed his poems. He told Miss Fenwick: "This arose out of my observations of the affecting music of these birds, hanging this way in the London streets during the freshness and stillness of the spring morning."*

* Knight is evidently mistaken in thinking that "the poem was written during the short visit which Wordsworth and his sister paid to their brother Richard in London in 1797, when he tried to get his tragedy

The visit to London, after so many months of quiet country life, acted as a stimulus to Wordsworth's productive powers. He returned to Alfoxden with a quickened appreciation of nature, and he realized that not even the mighty city held a man comparable in genius, attainments, and charm, to their neighbour and friend at Nether Stowey. Coleridge's magnetism extends even to those who endeavour to fasten their attention upon Wordsworth. Whenever the two are together, it is Coleridge who catches the eye and enthrals the ear. But he comes and goes, his intellectual fire darts now here and now there, his genius varies like the colour of a star, while Wordsworth, by slow but constant motion, rises in a calculable orbit and with a steady light. When Wordsworth lived at Alfoxden, they were in each other's houses almost every day. Their communion of spirit was close, and the result was a great quickening of their poetic powers. But the new life was more immediately evident in Coleridge. During these few months he composed most of his best work—" This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison," " The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," the first part of " Christabel," " France: an Ode," " Frost at Midnight," " Fears in Solitude," " The Nightingale: a Conversation Poem," and " Kubla Khan."

The story of how he wrote the " Ancient Mariner " illustrates the fact that, though they could together plan a work, it would in the end take form and spirit from an individual mind. On November 13, 1797,* Coleridge, with Wordsworth and his sister, started from Alfoxden about four o'clock in the afternoon, intending to walk to Lynton and the Valley of Stones, on the North Devon coast, about thirty-five miles distant.

' The Borderers,' brought on the stage." Indeed, it seems to me more than unlikely that they stayed with their brother, whom they rarely mention. He was at this time a bachelor, and lived at Staple Inn. And if " The Reverie of Poor Susan " were really composed before the publication of " Lyrical Ballads," one would suppose it would have been included in that volume.

* In the Fenwick note to " We are Seven," Wordsworth mistakenly says " in the spring of the year 1798," and he is also in error in saying the " *New* Monthly Magazine," which was not founded till years afterward.

With their small supply of money, it seemed a rash expenditure, but they light-heartedly put care aside by resolving to pay the expenses of the trip from the proceeds of a poem to be written for *The Monthly Magazine*. Thus relieved in mind, they tramped gaily over the Quantock Hills through the dark autumn evening, and spent the first night at the village of Watchet, on the Bristol Channel, planning the "Ancient Mariner" as they went. Coleridge invented most of the story, which he said was suggested to him by a dream of his friend Mr. Cruikshank, a resident of the Stowey neighbourhood. Wordsworth contributed the idea of poetic justice for the crime of killing an albatross. He had just been reading Shelvocke's "Voyages," where he had seen a description of this bird. He also suggested the gruesome incident of the navigation of the ship by the dead men. The three worked joyously together at the poem that night, Wordsworth contributing two or three complete lines. But the undertaking proved more congenial to Coleridge, and the poem is his. The trio completed their excursion, which took several days and furnished many delightful and droll recollections. Coleridge worked at the poem until it was finished, in March, on the 23rd of which month Dorothy wrote in her Journal: "Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished." But it was the night-wind off salt water as he went, "one of three," down into Watchet that first brought to him the Mariner's hail.

That mysterious poem, "Christabel," was begun in 1797, and, as J. Dykes Campbell has remarked,* it contains several observations of nature of which the originals are to be found in Dorothy's Journal from January 21 to March 25, 1798. She was gathering honey that spring for two "singing masons building roofs of gold."

The two poets were associated in another literary venture which was not so successful as the "Ancient Mariner." It was to have been a prose rhapsody, "The Wanderings of Cain," in three cantos, of which one, the

* "Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," p. 80.

second, has been preserved and printed among Coleridge's poems. In the tone of reverent tenderness with which he almost always mentions his friend, he thus, after thirty years, tells the story of this attempt:

"The work was to have been written in concert with another whose name is too venerable within the precincts of genius to be unnecessarily brought into connection with such a trifle, and who was then residing at a small distance from Nether Stowey. The title and subject were suggested by myself, who likewise drew out the scheme and the contents for each of the three books or cantos, of which the work was to consist, and which, the reader is to be informed, was to have been finished in one night! My partner undertook the first canto: I the second: and whichever had *done first* was to set about the third. Almost thirty years have passed by; yet at this moment I cannot without something more than a smile moot the question which of the two things was the more impracticable, for a mind so eminently original to compose another man's thoughts and fancies, or for a taste so austerely pure and simple to imitate the Death of Abel? Methinks I see his grand and noble countenance as at the moment when, having despatched my own portion of the task at full finger-speed, I hastened to him with my manuscript—that look of humorous despondency fixed on his almost blank sheet of paper, and then its silent mock-piteous admission of failure struggling with the sense of the exceeding ridiculousness of the whole scheme—which broke up in a laugh: and the Ancient Mariner was written instead."

Coleridge attempted the same subject in verse, and kept the introductory stanza, "which had been committed to writing for the purpose of procuring a friend's judgment on the metre." It is interesting to observe that the rhythm and the general musical effect are similar to those of Wordsworth's ballads, "The Last of the Flock," "The Idiot Boy," and "Peter Bell," composed about the same time. The same cadences, the same loose rhyming scheme, and the same length of line, were used for a similar description of innocent boyhood in a wilderness, by the mediæval German poet

Wolfram von Eschenbach, in his "Parzeval." Coleridge's stanza is as follows:

> Encinctured with a twine of leaves,
> That leafy twine his only dress!
> A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,
> By moonlight, in a wilderness.
> The moon was bright, the air was free,
> And fruits and flowers together grew
> On many a shrub and many a tree:
> And all put on a gentle hue,
> Hanging in the shadowy air
> Like a picture rich and rare.
> It was a climate where, they say
> The night is more belov'd than day.
> But who that beauteous Boy beguil'd,
> That beauteous Boy to linger here?
> Alone, by night, a little child,
> In place so silent and so wild—
> Has he no friend, no loving mother near?

Because of Coleridge's quicker responsiveness to intellectual impressions, we find in his poems written between November, 1797, and the summer of 1798, a more complete record of the thoughts that must have occupied Wordsworth's mind than the latter's own poems of that period reveal. Wordsworth gathered the harvest too, but not so soon. We have every reason to distrust the testimony of strangers, and even his own deprecatory remarks in old age, to the effect that he was not at that time occupied with politics. He was living in close daily intercourse with the suffering mind from whose anxiety were struck off "France: an Ode," and "Fears in Solitude," in February and April, 1798. These great poems, unsurpassed in our language as expressions of political feeling, show that the love of liberty still glowed as brightly as ever in Coleridge's breast. He still set the cause of humanity above insular pride. He still was tortured with a sense of the wrongs his country had committed. If at the same time he realized that the Revolution in France had deviated from its original course, if he turned heart-sick from a race who "still promising freedom" were "them-

selves too sensual to be free," there was little comfort for him in the thought either of those at home who expected "all change from change of constituted power," or of those who doted on the British Constitution "with a mad idolatry." To his far-seeing and humane mind it was an excruciating dilemma. There can be no doubt whatever that Wordsworth suffered like pangs. The astounding victories of Napoleon, meanwhile, were giving to the war-fever in England the aspect of exalted patriotism. There was panic in the air, to which the mutinies of the Nore and at Spithead gave a turn towards desperation and hardness.

Lloyd having left him on account of ill-health, Coleridge was almost penniless when winter came on. During the Wordsworths' visit to London, in December, he received an invitation to preach to the Unitarian congregation at Shrewsbury, and was on the point of accepting a call to be their pastor, when Josiah and Thomas Wedgwood, sons of the great potter, offered him an annuity of £150 for life, without conditions, as a mark of their appreciation of his poetic and philosophic genius. He had scruples against preaching for hire, and these generous and cultivated brothers hoped to save him for the work he was best fitted to do. Josiah Wedgwood's letter of January 10, containing their proposal, is as delicately worded as it is forcible:

"My brother and myself are possessed of a considerable superfluity of fortune; squandering and hoarding are equally distant from our inclinations. But we are earnestly desirous to convert this superfluity into a fund of beneficence, and we have now been accustomed for some time, to regard ourselves rather as Trustees than Proprietors."*

Coleridge preached a few Sundays at Shrewsbury, but withdrew his candidature and visited the Wedgwoods. By February 3 he had returned to Nether Stowey, as we learn from an entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal for that date: "Walked with Coleridge over the hills." The Journal begins January 20, 1798, and

* Mrs. Sandford, "Thomas Poole and his Friends," p. 257.

always a fine glow of tenderness and some heightening touch, which spiritualize the details. Take, for example, the opening sentences of the first entry:

"ALFOXDEN, *January 20th*, 1798.—The green paths down the hill-sides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges, the sheep are gathered together on the slopes. After the wet dark days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sunbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers."

Three days later she notes: "The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in the summer air. The villages marked out by beautiful beds of smoke."

Every day she and her brother walked together, sometimes in the wood that separated Alfoxden House from the village of Holford, sometimes on the hills above, whence they could see the turbid waters of the Bristol Channel and the Welsh coast beyond. They dipped into the coombes, or little valleys sloping to the sea, where autumn lingered long and spring came early. A characteristic entry is that of January 26:

"Walked upon the hill-tops; followed the sheep-tracks till we overlooked the larger coombe. Sat in the sunshine. The distant sheep-bells, the sound of the stream; the woodman winding along the half-marked road with his laden pony; locks of wool still spangled with the dewdrops; the blue-grey sea, shaded with immense masses of cloud, not streaked; the sheep glittering in the sunshine. Returned through the wood. The trees skirting the wood, being exposed more directly to the action of the sea-breeze, stripped of the network of their upper boughs, which are stiff and erect, like black skeletons; the ground strewed with the red berries of the holly. Set forward before two o'clock. Returned a little after four."

She notes "the ivy twisting round the oaks like bristled serpents," and how at night "the shadows of

the oaks blackened, and their lines became more strongly marked " when " the moon burst through the invisible veil which enveloped her."

There are but few touches due to sentiment or fancy. The actual is sufficiently wonderful. It is as if she were seeing this infinite world for the first time. She was very happy, in high health and spirits. The ordinary sights and sounds of country life were so exhilarating that to record them was a joyous solemnity, and she did not care to speculate upon their significance. To treat them as symbols would have seemed a strangely perverse and impertinent course. Sometimes, with a faculty rarely found except in children and painters, she sees things as they appear to be, and not as she knows they really are. For example, one evening she notes that the sea was " big and white, swelled to the very shores, but round and high in the middle." Could words possibly produce a more detailed and yet unified picture than this on February 24 ?—

" Went to the hill-top. Sat a considerable time overlooking the country towards the sea. The air blew pleasantly round us. The landscape mildly interesting. The Welsh hills capped by a huge range of tumultuous white clouds. The sea, spotted with white, of a bluish-grey in general, and streaked with darker lines. The near shores clear; scattered farm-houses, half concealed by green mossy orchards, fresh straw lying at the doors; hay-stacks in the fields. Brown fallows, the springing wheat, like a shade of green over the brown earth, and the choice meadow plots, full of sheep and lambs, of a soft and vivid green; a few wreaths of blue smoke, spreading along the ground; the oaks and beeches in the hedges retaining their yellow leaves; the distant prospect on the land side, islanded with sunshine; the sea, like a basin full to the margin; the dark fresh-ploughed fields; the turnips of a lively rough green Returned through the wood."

One scarcely knows whether to admire more such a distinct stroke as that " lively rough green " of the turnips, or the general composition of the picture, which is so plainly a day in late February or early March. Again, she mentions a prospect " *curiously* spread out for even

minute inspection, though so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate its bounds."

Their walks were usually in the afternoon and evening, and they brought home bundles of sticks which they gathered along the way.* Sometimes Basil was with them, sometimes Tom Poole, and very often Coleridge. The latter was at Shrewsbury preaching in December, and till January 29, when he visited the Wedgwoods. He probably returned to Nether Stowey on February 3, and came at once to Alfoxden. On that date he is mentioned for the first time in the Journal. "A mild morning," Dorothy writes, "the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Coleridge over the hills." Less methodical than even the Wordsworths, he appears to have had no scruple about breaking in upon their work at any time of day or night. So we find, under date of February 4: "Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with Coleridge." February 6: "Walked to Stowey over the hills." And so throughout this month and the next, and till April 9, few were the days on which the three did not meet somewhere. From about April 9 to 18 Coleridge was in Devonshire, visiting his relatives at Ottery St. Mary, and on his return the pleasant intercourse began again.†

Most of the entries are very brief. When Coleridge had talked to his heart's content, there was probably no time left except for the daily tasks, such as "hanging out linen." They did not keep country hours—never, at least, when he was of the party. Three successive entries show how the time flew — March 25:

* Mrs. Tyson, of Rydal, who remembered the Wordsworths well, having served in the family when she was a girl, told me in 1907 that the poet in his old age "was always gathering sticks, and often had quite a bundle of them in his hands behind his back."

† Mr. Thomas Hutchinson has called my attention to an error in Professor Knight's edition of the Journal. Dorothy is there represented as writing on April 13: "In the evening went to Stowey. I staid with Mr. Coleridge. Wm. went to Poole's. Supped with Mr. Coleridge." Besides the fact that she almost nowhere else writes of Coleridge as *Mr.*, it is beyond question that he was not at Nether Stowey at that time. The *Mr.* should be *Mrs.*

" Walked to Coleridge's after tea. Arrived at home at one o'clock. The night cloudy but not dark." 26th: " Went to meet Wedgwood at Coleridge's after dinner. Reached home at half-past twelve, a fine moonlight night; half-moon." 27th: " Dined at Poole's. Arrived at home a little after twelve, a partially cloudy, but light night, very cold." On a day of very high wind " Coleridge came to avoid the smoke; stayed all night," and they walked in the wood. Next day she " walked to Crookham [Crewcombe she means] with Coleridge and Wm. to make the appeal. Left Wm. there, and parted with Coleridge at the top of the hill." This perhaps refers to the difficulty with Mrs. St. Albyn about staying at Alfoxden. She frequently refers to her brother's being tired or ill. Apparently the Coleridges stayed with them for some days in March, and shortly afterwards she mentions poems which her brother was composing, among them " The Thorn," " A Whirl-blast from Behind the Hill," and " Peter Bell." A striking example of how she and her brother thought the same thoughts and used the same words is to be found by comparing his poem, " A Night-Piece," with the entries in her Journal for January 25 and 31. She writes:

" The sky spread over with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon, which, though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light as to checquer the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the centre of a black-blue vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, and bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed concentrated (half-moon)." And again: " Set forward to Stowey at half-past five. A violent storm in the wood; sheltered under the hollies. When we left home the moon immensely large, the skies scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon without concealing her."

The poem is as follows:

> The sky is overcast
> With a continuous cloud of texture close,
> Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
> Which through that vale is indistinctly seen,

A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
Chequering the ground—from rock, plant, tree, or tower.
At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up—the clouds are split
Asunder,—and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There in a blue-black vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives; how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
But they are silent;—still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault,
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

Nearly fifty years later the poet said of these lines: "Composed on the road between Nether Stowey and Alfoxden extempore. I distinctly recollect the very moment when I was struck, as described, 'He looks up —the clouds are split, etc.'"

It is quite likely that the germ of an idea which bore fruit in the "Sonnets on the River Duddon" was implanted in Wordsworth's mind on an occasion to which Dorothy refers in the following entry:

"*April 6th.*—Went a part of the way home with Coleridge. A pleasant warm morning, but a showery day. Walked a short distance up the lesser Coombe, with an intention of going to the source of the brook, but the evening closing in, cold prevented us. The Spring still advancing very slowly. The horse-chestnuts budding, and the hedgerows beginning to look green, but nothing fully expanded."

Coleridge somewhere proposes the plan of following the course of a stream, and recording its life in a poem or series of poems. And there is more than an acci-

dental resemblance between Dorothy's words and the lines in Coleridge's "Christabel":

> 'Tis a month before the month of May,
> And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

It is in the Alfoxden Journal that we read the first of Dorothy Wordsworth's many remarks on the exhaustion which it cost her brother to compose poetry. On April 20 she writes: "Walked in the evening up the hill dividing the Coombes. Came home the Crookham way, by the thorn and the 'little muddy pond.' Nine o'clock at our return. William all the morning engaged in wearisome composition. The moon crescent. *Peter Bell* begun."

On Wednesday, May 16, she writes: "Coleridge, William, and myself, set forward to the Chedder rocks; slept at Bridgwater;" and under date of Tuesday the 22nd she writes: "Walked to Chedder. Slept at Cross." Here these precious jottings come to an end.

It seems likely that after visiting the wonderful limestone gorge at Cheddar, they proceeded, perhaps by way of Wells and Bristol, to the valley of the Wye, and made the visit to Thelwall's farm which is mentioned in the Fenwick note to an "Anecdote for Fathers." It was about forty miles west of the Wye, and beyond a mountain range.

In May also probably occurred the visit of William Hazlitt to Nether Stowey, to which we owe a marvellously vivid description of Wordsworth as he then appeared. We may depend upon Hazlitt to have set down aught in malice that occurred to him. He would not be inclined to change a single feature by way of flattery. We have, indeed, to be on our guard with him, against the venom of his rancour, as when he declares that Wordsworth had the free use of Alfoxden, and consequently grew soft-hearted towards Toryism. Anyone who is at all well acquainted with Hazlitt's method of suggesting falsehood will know how to value this insinuation. Of the close accuracy of his portraiture there is, however, no reason to doubt. He was an

almost unrivalled master of personal description, and his account of Wordsworth corresponds trait for trait, down to the twitching lines of the mouth, with a drawing made by W. Shuter in April, to which Dorothy referred in her Journal on April 26.*

When Coleridge preached at Shrewsbury in January, Hazlitt, who was a lad of nineteen, walked ten miles to hear him. The poet-philosopher-preacher completed his conquest during a subsequent visit at Hazlitt's home, and dazzled the boy by inviting him to visit Nether Stowey in the spring. Hazlitt's reminiscences, which he called "My First Acquaintance with Poets," was published, in substance, in 1817, and afterwards amplified and reprinted. I quote from the "Memoirs of William Hazlitt," 1867:

"I arrived," says Hazlitt, "and was well received. . . . In the afternoon Coleridge took me over to All-Foxden, a romantic old family mansion of the St. Aubins, where Wordsworth lived. It was then in the possession of a friend of the poet, who gave him the free use of it. Somehow that period (the time just after the French Revolution) was not a time when *nothing was given for nothing*. The mind opened, and a softness might be perceived coming over the heart of individuals, beneath 'the scales that fence' our self-interest. Wordsworth himself was from home, but his sister kept house, and set before us a frugal repast; and we had free access to her brother's poems, the 'Lyrical Ballads,' which were still in manuscript or in the form of 'Sibylline Leaves.' I dipped into a few of these with great satisfaction, and with the faith of a novice. I slept that night in an old room with blue hangings, and covered with the round-faced family-portraits of the age of George I. and II., and from the wooded declivity of the adjoining park that overlooked my window, at the dawn of day, could

. . . hear the loud stag speak.

"That morning, as soon as breakfast was over, we strolled out into the park, and seating ourselves on the trunk of an old ash-tree that stretched along the ground, Coleridge read aloud, with a sonorous and musical voice, the ballad of 'Betty Foy.' I was not critically or skep-

* See the frontispiece.

tically inclined. I saw touches of truth and nature, and took the rest for granted. But in the 'Thorn,' the 'Mad Mother,'* and the 'Complaint of a Poor Indian Woman,' I felt that deeper power and pathos which have been since acknowledged,

> In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,

as the characteristics of this author; and the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me. It had to me something of the effect that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or the first welcome breath of Spring,

> While yet the trembling year is unconfirmed.

Coleridge and myself walked back to Stowey that evening, and his voice sounded high

> Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and faith,
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,

as we passed through echoing grove, by fairy stream or waterfall, gleaming in the summer moonlight! He lamented that Wordsworth was not prone enough to believe in the traditional superstitions of the place, and that there was a something corporeal, a *matter-of-factness*, a clinging to the palpable, or often to the petty, in his poetry, in consequence. His genius was not a spirit that descended to him through the air; it sprung out of the ground like a flower, or unfolded itself from a green spray, on which the goldfinch sang. He said, however (if I remember right), that this objection must be confined to his descriptive pieces; that his philosophic poetry had a grand and comprehensive spirit in it, so that his soul seemed to inhabit the universe like a palace, and to discover truth by intuition, rather than by deduction. The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage. I think I see him now. He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more gaunt and Don Quixote-like. He was quaintly dressed (according to the *costume* of that unconstrained period) in a brown fustian jacket and striped pantaloons. There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait, not unlike his own 'Peter Bell.' There was a severe, worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in his eye (as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance), an intense,

* "Her eyes are wild."

high, narrow, forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling, and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn, stately expression of the rest of his face. Chantrey's bust wants the marking traits, but he was teased into making it regular and heavy. Haydon's head of him, introduced into the *Entrance of Christ into Jerusalem*, is the most like his drooping weight of thought and expression. He sat down and talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr* like the crust on wine. He instantly began to make havoc of the half of a Cheshire cheese on the table, and said triumphantly that 'his marriage with experience had not been so productive as Mr. Southey's in teaching him a knowledge of the good things of this life.' He had been to see the 'Castle Spectre,' by Monk Lewis,* while at Bristol, and described it very well. He said 'it fitted the taste of the audience like a glove.' This *ad captandum* merit was, however, by no means a recommendation of it, according to the severe principles of the new school, which reject rather than court popular effect. . . . We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of 'Peter Bell' in the open air; and the comment made upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, 'his face was a book where men might read strange matters,' and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth, which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment. Perhaps they have deceived themselves by making habitual use of this ambiguous accomplishment. Coleridge's manner is more full, animating, and varied; Wordsworth's more equable, sustained, and internal. The one might be termed more *dramatic*, the other more *lyrical*."

* "The Castle Spectre," a blood-curdling tragedy by Matthew Gregory Lewis—"Monk" Lewis—was performed for the first time at Drury Lane Theatre, London, on December 14, 1797, and afterwards in the winter and spring of 1798. (See Genest's "Account of the English Stage," VII. 332, 414, and 505). Wordsworth, in a letter to James Tobin, March 6, 1798, mentions the extravagant popular success which it achieved. He evidently, from Hazlitt's remark, saw it played at Bristol near the end of May.

The reader must disentangle for himself what is original in this passage from what was woven into it upon reflection and after the lapse of years. There may well be some inaccuracies, but on the whole this is much the most complete and interesting portrayal of Wordsworth in youth or early manhood that we possess. The precise date, and even the month, of Hazlitt's visit is uncertain. He says:

" Thus I passed three weeks at Nether Stowey and in the neighbourhood, generally devoting the afternoons to a delightful chat in an arbour made of bark by the poet's friend Tom Poole, sitting under two fine elm trees, and listening to the bees humming round us, while we quaffed our *flip*."

He describes a jaunt along the coast from Dunster to Lynton, with Coleridge and a young man from Stowey. Coleridge told him that he and Wordsworth had once intended making the Valley of Rocks, near Lynton, the scene of a prose tale, and that the " Lyrical Ballads "

" were an experiment to be tried by him and Wordsworth to see how far the public taste would endure poetry written in a more natural and simple style than had hitherto been attempted; totally disregarding the artifices of poetical diction, and making use only of such words as had probably been common in the most ordinary language since the days of Henry II."

Hazlitt tells us that, in a day or two after they returned from Lynton to Stowey, Coleridge set out for Germany. Making allowance for vagueness at the various points of this narrative, we are almost forced to conclude that the visit took place in May or June.

A picture of the sordid side of rural life, composed by Wordsworth about this time, and known in his family as the " Somersetshire Tragedy," was not deemed fit for publication.

The lease of Alfoxden expired June 24, and two days later the Wordsworths were homeless wanderers again. According to the Bishop of Lincoln,* the poet gave the following account of their first movements:

* " Memoirs," I. 118.

"We left Alfoxden on Monday morning, the 26th of June, stayed with Coleridge till the Monday following, then set forth on foot towards Bristol. We were at Cottle's for a week, and thence we went toward the banks of the Wye. We crossed the Severn Ferry, and walked ten miles further to Tintern Abbey, a very beautiful ruin on the Wye. The next morning we walked along the river through Monmouth to Goderich Castle, there slept, and returned the next day to Tintern, thence to Chepstow, and from Chepstow back again in a boat to Tintern, where we slept, and thence back in a small vessel to Bristol."

The most precious result of this journey was the poem entitled "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey," of which Wordsworth says, in the Fenwick note: "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these notes"—*i.e.*, "Lyrical Ballads."

ALFOXDEN.

CHAPTER XV

"LYRICAL BALLADS"

We are now approaching the most momentous event in Wordsworth's life, so far as his connection with the public is concerned. For many months he and Coleridge had been preparing to make what proved to be one of the most gallant adventures in literary history. They had exerted themselves to produce enough poetry to fill a volume, and were already planning with Cottle for its publication.

It is perhaps not generally known that the names of S. T. Coleridge and W. Wordsworth had already appeared in print together. In a rare copy of "Poems by Francis Wrangham, M.A., member of Trinity College, Cambridge," published in 1795, and now belonging to the library of Princeton University, they are both credited with translations, the former of some Latin and the latter of some French verses, already mentioned, "L'Education de l'Amour," by the Vicomte de Ségur. The first poem in the little volume is dedicated to Basil Montagu.

The two poets had been in communication with Cottle on the subject of printing their tragedies. In a letter to Cottle* dated merely 1798, Coleridge says: "I am requested by Wordsworth to put to you the following questions: What could you, conveniently and prudently, and what would you give for—first, our two Tragedies, with small prefaces, containing an analysis of our principal characters? . . . Second, Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain and Tale of a Woman; which poems, with a

* "Early Recollections," I. 298, and "Reminiscences," 166.

few others which he will add, and notes, will make a volume." To this Cottle appends the statement: "I offered Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Wordsworth thirty guineas each, as proposed, for their two tragedies; but which, after some hesitation, was declined, from the hope of introducing one or both on the stage. The volume of Poems was left for some future arrangement."

According to Cottle, he met Wordsworth for the first time at Stowey, though, as we have seen, there is reason to think their acquaintance began at Bristol long before the poet settled in Somersetshire. The passage in Cottle's "Reminiscences"* is very interesting:

"A visit to Mr. Coleridge at Stowey had been the means of my introduction to Mr. Wordsworth, who read me many of his Lyrical Pieces, when I immediately perceived in them extraordinary merit, and advised him to publish them, expressing a belief that they would be well received. I further said he should be at no risk; that I would give him the same sum which I had given to Mr. Coleridge and to Mr. Southey, and that it would be a gratifying circumstance to me, to have been the publisher of the first volumes of three such poets, as Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth; such a distinction might never again occur to a provincial bookseller. To the idea of publishing he expressed a strong objection, and after several interviews I left him, with an earnest wish that he would reconsider his determination. Soon after Mr. Wordsworth sent me the following letter:

"'ALLFOXDEN,
"'12*th April*, 1798.

"'MY DEAR COTTLE,
"'. . . You will be pleased to hear that I have gone on very rapidly adding to my stock of poetry. Do come and let me read it to you under the old trees in the park. We have a little more than two months to stay in this place. Within these four days the season has advanced with greater rapidity than I ever remember, and the country becomes almost every hour more lovely. God bless you.
"'Your affectionate friend,
"'W. WORDSWORTH.'"

* p. 174 and "Early Recollections," I. 309.

The invitation was repeated by Coleridge and again, in the following note, by Wordsworth:

" DEAR COTTLE,

" We look for you with great impatience. We will never forgive you if you do not come. I say nothing of the 'Salisbury Plain' till I see you. I am determined to finish it, and equally so that you shall publish.

" I have lately been busy about another plan, which I do not wish to mention till I see you; let this be very, very soon, and stay a week if possible; as much longer as you can. God bless you, dear Cottle,

" Yours sincerely,

" W. WORDSWORTH.

" ALLFOXDEN,

" *9th May*, 1798."

Cottle prints in the same connection,* but without date, a long letter from Coleridge, which shows that he and the Wordsworths were trying to raise money for some unusual expense, undoubtedly their trip to Germany. It was perhaps written at about the same time as Wordsworth's of May 9. There is no mention of Cottle's visit in Dorothy's Journal, but it might have occurred between May 9 and 16, when she made no entries. Omitting several sentences already quoted, the letter is as follows:

" MY DEAR COTTLE,

" Neither Wordsworth or myself could have been otherwise than uncomfortable, if anybody but yourself had received from us the first offer of our Tragedies, and of the volume of Wordsworth's Poems. At the same time, we did not expect that you could, with prudence and propriety, advance such a sum as we should want at the time we specified. In short, we both regard the publication of our Tragedies as an evil. It is not impossible but that in happier times, they may be brought on the stage: and to throw away this chance for a mere trifle, would be to make the present moment act fraudulently and usuriously towards the future time. . . . We consider the publication of them an evil on any terms; but our thoughts were bent on a plan for the accomplishment of which a certain sum of money was necessary, (the whole,) at that particular time, and in

* " Early Recollections," I. 310, and " Rem' 6.

order to this we resolved, although reluctantly, to part with our Tragedies: that is, if we could obtain thirty guineas for each, and at less than thirty guineas Wordsworth will not part with the copy-right of his volume of Poems. We shall offer the Tragedies to no one, for we have determined to procure the money some other way. If you choose the volume of Poems, at the price mentioned, to be paid at the time specified, i.e. thirty guineas, to be paid sometime in the last fortnight of July, you may have them; but remember, my dear fellow! I write to you now merely as a bookseller, and entreat you, in your answer, to consider yourself only; as to us, although money is necessary to our plan, yet the plan is not necessary to our happiness; and if it were, W. could sell his Poems for that sum to someone else, or we could procure the money without selling the Poems. So I entreat you again and again, in your answer, which must be immediate, consider yourself only. . . .

"At all events, come down, Cottle, as soon as you can, but before Midsummer, and we will procure a horse easy as thine own soul, and we will go on a roam to Linton and Linmouth, which, if thou comest in May, will be in all their pride of woods and waterfalls, not to speak of its august cliffs, and the green ocean, and the vast Valley of Stones, all which live disdainful of the seasons, or accept new honours only from the winter's snow. At all events come down, and cease not to believe me much and affectionately your friend,

"S. T. COLERIDGE."

Cottle says that he accepted these invitations, and spent a week with Coleridge and Wordsworth at Alfoxden House, during which time, besides the reading of manuscript poems, they took him on the proposed "roam."

"At this interview," he says, "it was determined that the volume should be published under the title of 'Lyrical Ballads,' on the terms stipulated in a former letter: that this volume should not contain the poem of 'Salisbury Plain,' but only an extract from it; that it should not contain the poem of 'Peter Bell,' but consist rather of sundry shorter pieces more recently written. I had recommended two volumes, but one was fixed on, and that to be published anonymously. It was to be begun immediately, and with the 'Ancient Mariner'; which poem I brought with me to Bristol."

Cottle had good reason to expect great things of Wordsworth. In "Early Recollections," I. 251, and "Reminiscences," p. 143, he writes:

"Mr. Coleridge says, in a letter received from him March 8th, 1798, 'The giant Wordsworth—God love him! When I speak in the terms of admiration due to his intellect, I fear lest these terms should keep out of sight the amiableness of his manners. He has written near twelve hundred lines of blank verse, superior, I hesitate not to aver, to anything in our language which any way resembles it.'"

It is a pleasure to know that nine years afterwards the flame of Coleridge's admiration burned just as brightly, for Cottle says that in 1807 he received a letter from him, saying of Wordsworth: "He is one whom God knows I love and honour as far beyond myself as both morally and intellectually he is above me."

The poets objected to some of the details proposed by Cottle, and there was more correspondence on the subject. In the course of the summer, the Alfoxden idyll being at an end, Coleridge removed to Westbury, two miles from Bristol. After the Wye excursion, as we have seen, the Wordsworths returned to Bristol, about July 9, and appear to have remained there about six weeks. The Bishop of Lincoln, quoting either from letters of Miss Wordsworth or from some journal of hers now lost, reports that on July 18, 1798, she wrote: "William's poems are now in the press; they will be out in six weeks"; and on September 13: "They are printed, but not published . . . in one small volume, without the name of the author; their title is 'Lyrical Ballads, with other poems.' Cottle has given thirty guineas for William's share of the volume."

It was printed at Bristol on or about September 1. The impression consisted of five hundred copies. As originally printed, the title-page was:*

"Lyrical Ballads/with/A few other Poems./Bristol:/Printed by Biggs & Cottle,/For T. N. Longman, Pater-Noster Row, London./1798.

* See Mr. Thomas Hutchinson's Biographical Note in his valuable reprint, 1898. He states that he knows of only one copy with this title-page—viz., the one, formerly Southey's, which is now in the British Museum.

It was an octavo in paper boards. Other copies have the following title-page:

"Lyrical Ballads,/with/A few other Poems./London:/Printed for J. & A. Arch, Gracechurch-street./1798."

The copy at the British Museum, besides other differences, contains a poem of Coleridge, "Lewti; or the Circassian Love-Chant," which had appeared in *The Morning Post*, a London newspaper, on April 13. Though it had been printed over a pseudonym, the publisher of *The Morning Post*, Daniel Stuart, and no doubt other persons, knew it was by Coleridge. For this poem a new one, "The Nightingale," was therefore substituted. Loyal compliance with the poets' desire for anonymity may have induced Cottle to forgo the anticipated pleasure of figuring as their publisher, after first printing a few copies in which his name appeared. He was known to be their friend, and to have had many business dealings with Coleridge. Mr. Thomas Hutchinson gives him the benefit of this conjecture, but inclines to believe that a far different reason had greater weight with the aspiring publisher. In Cottle's opinion Southey was as great a poet as either of the others. He was more prolific, and his work had already attracted favourable attention, whereas there was entire truth in a remark made by Coleridge a few months before, that Wordsworth's name was nothing to a large number of persons, and that his own stank.

There had been a sad quarrel between Southey and Coleridge, the latter accusing the former of wishing to ruin the Pantisocracy scheme. When this old sore was healed, a misunderstanding, which involved Charles Lloyd and Lamb in a league with Southey against the unconscious Coleridge, arose about some of Coleridge's verses which were erroneously supposed to reflect upon Southey. Mr. Hutchinson would have us believe that Southey, being determined to write a hostile review of the book, and not wishing to injure Cottle, persuaded him to dispose of his stock. I am not prepared to deny this charge, which is supported with great ability, but it seems almost too bad to believe. However that may

be, the fact is that Cottle turned over to Arch nearly the whole impression; and his alleged reason—namely, that the sale was slow—can hardly have been the only one, because he did it within the first two weeks, without waiting to see how the public would receive the book. Cottle refers to the transaction in a would-be casual way, which shows that he felt some regret, saying:*

"As a curious literary fact, I might mention that the sale of the first edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads' was so slow, and the severity of most of the reviews so great, that their progress to oblivion, notwithstanding the merit which I was quite sure they possessed, seemed ordained to be as rapid as it was certain. I had given thirty guineas for the copy-right as detailed in the preceding letters; but the heavy sale induced me at length to part with, at a loss, the largest proportion of the impression of Five Hundred, to Mr. Arch, a London bookseller. After this transaction had occurred, I received a letter from Mr. Wordsworth, written the day before he set sail for the continent, requesting me to make over my interest in the 'Lyrical Ballads' to Mr. Johnson, of St. Paul's Churchyard. This I could not have done, had I been so disposed, as the engagement had been made with Mr. Arch."

Only one criticism of the book appeared, so far as I know, before December, and that was Southey's very unfavourable and condescending article in *The Critical Review* for October.

On August 27 Wordsworth and his sister arrived in London, having seen the University of Oxford on the way. Where they stayed or how they occupied themselves in London is not known. We do not touch solid ground again until Dorothy begins her Journal of their travels, without which their residence in Germany would be almost a blank to us. We know that the tour had been long in contemplation, and was carefully planned. As early as March 11, 1798, Wordsworth had written to James Losh,† a friend at Carlisle, urging him to join the

* "Reminiscences," 257.

† The letter is printed in Professor Knight's "Life of Wordsworth," I. 147, and in his "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 358.

travelling party, which was to include both Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge. It was their plan, he said, to pass two years in Germany. They hoped to settle near a university, and, if possible, in a mountainous district. On account of the expense of travelling, they wished to find this place not far from Hamburg. All these requirements point to Göttingen. Wordsworth also confides to Losh that he has written 706 lines of a poem, which he hopes to make of considerable utility. "Its title," he says, "will be The Recluse; or, Views of Nature, Man, and Society." We are not at all bound to suppose that these lines were ever included among the 1,200 or 1,300 previously mentioned.

They purposed in those two years "to acquire the German language," and to furnish themselves "with a tolerable stock of information in natural science." This is what he tells Losh, in behalf not only of himself, but of his sister and the Coleridges. M. Legouis in his admirable chapter on Wordsworth's Relation to Science, has shown that these were not words written at random, but that many of the subjects already chosen by the poets and many peculiarities in the work they had already accomplished were determined by a wish to study "facts of the soul" in a scientific manner. Their purpose was to observe actual cases, unhampered by the factitious distinctions between the normal and the abnormal set up by psychologists, and to enrich the science of mind, at that time so meagrely furnished with examples.

There is even a hint of these scientific pretensions in a letter from Charles Lamb to Southey, dated July 28, 1798:

"Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to the eternal regret of his native Devonshire, emigrates to Westphalia—'Poor Lamb' (these were his last words) 'if he wants any *knowledge* he may apply to me'—in ordinary cases, I thanked him, I have an 'Encyclopædia' at hand, but on such an occasion as going over to a German university, I could not refrain from sending him the following propositions, to be by him defended or oppugned (or both) at Leipsic or Gottingen."

Then follows a list of propositions, similar to a list which Lamb had sent to Coleridge himself, and all implying that the latter was a liar, a sophist, and a sentimentalist. Charles Lloyd had poisoned Lamb's mind with false reports about their friend. Lamb had for once allowed his playfulness to turn into something like mischief. Coleridge had taken offence. Their old comradeship had been rudely broken. Dorothy Wordsworth had been brought into the quarrel by the meddlesome Lloyd. Coleridge wrote a generous letter, full of patience and true humility, to his mistaken friend, beginning, "Lloyd has informed me through Miss Wordsworth that you intend no longer to correspond with me."* The summer of 1798 was thus rendered a time of much unhappiness for Coleridge. His former pupil, Charles Lloyd, had slandered him. He may have suspected his wife's brother-in-law and his former associate, Southey, of trying to undermine his literary reputation, and at least he felt hurt by Southey's self-righteous aloofness. He thought he had lost the love of his oldest friend, Charles Lamb, and the dream of having the Wordsworths always near him at Alfoxden was shattered. Nether Stowey was no longer Arcady, but a stupid out-of-the-way village. His cottage was no longer the delightful trysting-place of gods and muses, but the mean, cramped, and almost squalid house which Poole long before warned him it was. Moreover, for a man who naturally disliked public controversy, and desired to cultivate his mind in tranquillity, he was achieving entirely too much notoriety. He said very truly that his name "stank." A group of clever young Tory writers, in *The Anti-Jacobin*, were assailing, amid general applause, the reputation of poets, orators, and pamphleteers, who had been so imprudent as to favour the Revolution. They drove this routed and discouraged band before them in a savage pursuit. To be overtaken by the light cavalry

* Mr. E. V. Lucas expresses his opinion ("Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 116) that about this time Lamb wrote his pathetic lines, "The Old Familiar Faces," and that the friend mentioned in the next to the last stanza was Coleridge.

of *The Anti-Jacobin* was not only unpleasant, but dangerous. In the issue for July 9, 1798, Coleridge was distinctly mentioned, and Wordsworth probably alluded to, in the scurrilous verses entitled "New Morality." Priestley, Wakefield, Thelwall, Paine, Williams, Godwin, and Holcroft, are pilloried as admirers of Lepaux, a member of the French Directory, and leader of the Theophilanthropists; and in the same passage occur these lines:

> *Couriers* and *Stars*, Sedition's evening host,
> Thou *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning Post*,
> Whether ye make the Rights of Man your theme,
> Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,
> Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
> Still, blasphemous or blackguard, praise Lepaux!
>
> And ye five other wandering bards, that move
> In sweet accord of harmony and love,
> Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd, and Lamb and Co.,
> Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lepaux!

The newspapers mentioned were Whig journals. Many of Coleridge's poems were first printed in *The Morning Post*. *The Anti-Jacobin* was succeeded in July by another publication of the same character and tendency, *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, which contained caricatures by Gillray, in which Coleridge and Southey are represented with asses' heads, and Lloyd and Lamb as toad and frog. In a set of verses, "The Anarchists," Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, and Lloyd, are held up to ridicule, but there is no allusion to a fifth member of the company. Paine, Priestley, Thelwall, Godwin, Wakefield, and Holcroft, figure also in this libel. Of these proceedings even Southey wrote:*

"What I think the worst part of the Anti-Jacobine abuse, is the lumping together men of such opposite principles; this is stupid. . . . Violent men there undoubtedly are among the democrats, as they are always called, but is there anyone among them whom the ministerialists will allow to be moderate? The Anti-Jacobine certainly speaks the sentiments of government."

* Letter to C. W. W. Wynn, August 15, 1798.

The plan of taking Mrs. Coleridge to Germany was given up. She and the two children, Hartley and Berkeley, were left at Nether Stowey, and about September 10, Coleridge joined the Wordsworths in London.* The anonymous volume of joint authorship, "Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems," was published, probably just after his arrival, and Coleridge arranged with Johnson, the bookseller, to publish his "Fears in Solitude, written in 1798, during the alarm of an invasion; to which are added France, an Ode; and Frost at Midnight."† The title-page, as before remarked, reads as follows:

"Lyrical Ballads,/with A few other Poems./London:/Printed for J. & A. Arch, Gracechurch-street./1798."

A few copies have, instead of the fourth and fifth lines, the words: "Joseph Cottle, Bristol."

The volume contained the following poems: "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere"; "The Foster-Mother's Tale"; "Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite"; "The Nightingale: a Conversational Poem"; "The Female Vagrant"; "Goody Blake and Harry Gill"; "Lines written at a small distance from my House, and sent by my little Boy to the Person to whom they are addressed"; "Simon Lee, the old Huntsman"; "Anecdote for Fathers"; "We are Seven"; "Lines written in early spring"; "The Thorn"; "The last of the Flock"; "The Dungeon"; "The Mad Mother"; "The Idiot Boy"; "Lines written near Richmond, upon the Thames, at Evening"; "Expostulation and Reply"; "The Tables turned—an Evening Scene, on the same subject"; "Old Man travelling"; "The Complaint of a forsaken Indian Woman"; "The Convict"; "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey." Of these

* J. Dykes Campbell, "Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge," p. 92.

† The poets acted wisely in not lingering to enjoy the praises of reviewers and readers. They would have had to wait long. The first favourable remark that I have been able to discover is in a letter from Lamb to Southey, dated November 8, 1798. See E. V. Lucas, "The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," Vol. VI., p. 130.

twenty-three pieces, four were written by Coleridge—"The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere," "The Foster-Mother's Tale," "The Nightingale," and "The Dungeon." The ineffective titles of Wordsworth's contributions show how incapable he was of perceiving small occasions of ridicule. It is a pity that many of his best poems are marred with ill-sounding labels instead of having real names appropriate to their contents. He erred in this way not through indifference to popularity, but through a sort of pedantry, a habit of paying too close attention to his own mental history.

On Friday, September 14, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Coleridge, and a young man from Stowey named John Chester, left London by stage-coach. They reached Yarmouth at noon next day, and sailed for Hamburg in a packet-boat on Sunday morning. Of their voyage, and the first few weeks of their sojourn in Germany, we have detailed but not very systematic accounts in a Journal kept by Miss Wordsworth and some letters of Coleridge printed in *The Friend* for November 23, December 7, and December 21, 1809, and reprinted in "Biographia Literaria" under the title of "Satyrane's Letters." The travellers appear to have been in very gay spirits. Coleridge's description of the passage sounds like the aimless rattle of a clever boy. He exhibits the prejudices of a person who has never been outside of his native land. He objects to the speech, the manners, and the complexions, of the foreigners on board, except a French *émigré*, with whom he and his friends continued to associate for some time after landing. Him he describes as "a perfect gentleman," a type "frequent in England, rare in France, and found, where it is found, in age, or at the latest period of manhood; while in Germany the character is almost unknown." He reserves even a lower circle for "the Anglo-American democrats," among whom is to be sought "the proper *antipode* of a gentleman." He never pauses in this breathless outburst of insularity to explain where he has picked up so much knowledge of countries he has never seen.

On arriving at Hamburg, Wordsworth went to seek lodgings, while the others, immobile through ignorance of foreign ways and languages, guarded the luggage. His knowledge of French served them in good stead.* After breakfasting with their French friend, they passed the day in sight-seeing, and went to the French Theatre. They visited the English bookseller, Remnant, where they bought Bürger's poems and Percy's "Reliques."† Their characteristic interest in country life led them to various small towns in the neighbourhood—Blankenese, Harburg, and Altona. They made the acquaintance of one of the numerous brothers of the poet Klopstock, perhaps Victor, the newspaper editor, who introduced them to Christoph Daniel Ebeling, professor of history and Greek at the Hamburg academic gymnasium, and afterwards the well-known librarian of the city.

At Herr Klopstock's house they met at dinner his brother, Friedrich Gottlieb, the poet, who, Dorothy tells us, "maintained an animated conversation with William during the whole afternoon." Coleridge tells us‡ that on another occasion he and Wordsworth called on the aged German poet, and had a long conversation in French, Wordsworth acting as interpreter. Coleridge now and then interposed a question in Latin. Klopstock confessed that he knew very little concerning the history of German poetry and the elder German poets; "the subject had not particularly excited his curiosity." But he talked of Milton and Glover, and "thought Glover's blank verse superior to Milton's," but, after

* Coleridge says, in "Satyrane's Letters," No. 1: "My companion, who, you recollect, speaks the French language with unusual propriety, had formed a kind of confidential acquaintance with the French emigrant, who appeared to be a man of sense, and whose manners were those of a perfect gentleman. He seemed about fifty, or rather more." He proved to be "an intimate friend of the celebrated Abbé de Lisle; and from the large fortune which he possessed under the monarchy, had rescued sufficient not only for independence, but for respectability." A fine standard of respectability! How honest Tom Poole would have blushed for his hero!

† In the Catalogue of Wordsworth's library in 1859, Percy's "Reliques," in three vols., 1794, is mentioned, with this remark: "With MS. note, bought at Hamburgh, 1798, by William Wordsworth."

‡ "Satyrane's Letters," No. 3.

all, he appeared not to know much about Milton, whom he had read in a prose translation when he was fourteen. Wordsworth proceeded to set him straight, giving "his definition and notion of harmonious verse, that it consisted (the English iambic blank verse above all) in the apt arrangement of pauses and cadences, and the sweep of whole paragraphs." The talk covered a wide range; the venerable author, in his feeble state of health, aroused the sympathy of his young English admirers; and when they left him they walked on the ramparts, "discoursing together on the poet and his conversation," till their attention was diverted to the beauty and singularity of the sunset and the effects on the objects round them. Wordsworth returned more than once to talk with Klopstock, and they discoursed not only on poetry, but on the Kantian philosophy, on Wolf, Nicolai, and Engel, on Rousseau, on the drama. Wordsworth expressed his preference for Dryden over Pope. Klopstock spoke favourably of Goethe, and especially of Wieland, but said that Schiller could not live. Wordsworth took copious notes of these conversations, and it is evident that he was well versed in contemporary German literature. Klopstock, they found, had once been an enthusiast for the French Revolution, but was now quite turned against it.

The friends must have realized that they could never learn German if they kept together, and on Sunday, October 1, Coleridge and Chester set out for Ratzeburg, a small town about thirty-five miles to the north-east.* Two days later the Wordsworths took the diligence to Braunschweig. "Dorothy and I," he wrote to Poole, "are going to speculate further up in the country." In the same letter which contains this announcement he remarks: "I have one word to say about Alfoxden: pray, keep your eye upon it. If any series of accidents should bring it again into the market, we should be glad to have it, if we could manage it." Over wretched roads they travelled by diligence across the Luneburg

* Poole's letters to Coleridge, in the British Museum, are directed in care of the Pastor Unruke (Query: Unruhe), Ratzeburg.

Heath, and into the Harz Mountains. It took them nearly two days to reach Braunschweig, and one day more to get to Goslar, which was their destination. In this ancient and beautiful little city they appear to have remained at least till January. In summer it would have been a delightful residence, owing to its situation among the hills; but they soon exhausted its winter attractions, and, failing to make many acquaintances, were forced to lead a very secluded life. Miss Wordsworth described it as a lifeless town, and complained that if a man wished to go into society, and had his wife or sister with him, he would be obliged to give entertainments. So they tried to learn German from the family with whom they lived, and by reading. "William," she wrote to Mrs. Marshall, "is very industrious. His mind is always active; indeed, too much so. He over-wearies himself, and suffers from pain and weakness in the side."

The Wordsworths, while at Goslar, lived in a house which is still standing—No. 86, Breite-strasse. It was built after the great fire of 1728, was formerly No. 107, belonged to St. Stephen's parish, and was occupied in 1799 by the widow of Georg Christian Ernst Deppermann. This Deppermann, whose family originally came from Hamburg, was a shopkeeper, a member of the merchants' and the tailors' guilds, a town-councillor, and at the time of his death, in 1796, a senator of Goslar. His widow died December 28, 1800, the old house continuing to be occupied by Johann Heinrich Friedrich Deppermann, apparently her son. The latter became a bürger February 23, 1801, and on the next day a member of the Krämer Gild, to which his father had belonged. He was in possession of the house in 1811, being at that time thirty-nine years old, or two years younger than Wordsworth.*

* These facts, never previously published, were communicated to me by my friend, the Rev. Ambrose White Vernon, who, in company with Dr. Elmer Johnson, the learned historian of the Schwenkfelder denomination, visited Goslar at my request in 1913. There they received great kindness and indispensable help from Professor Hoelscher, the antiquarian, who ransacked the city archives. The record of the Depper-

Coleridge, meanwhile, was meeting many people and enjoying many advantages at Ratzeburg, for which he said he had to pay dear. "Including *all* expenses," he wrote to Poole, "I have not lived at less than two pounds a week. Wordsworth (from whom I receive long and affectionate letters) has enjoyed scarcely one advantage, but his expenses have been considerably less than they were in England."* Coleridge was amassing material for a Life of Lessing, a work suited to his genius, and called for by the needs of his time, but which he never wrote. The only passage with which I am acquainted that may be regarded as a description of Wordsworth's surroundings at Goslar is the following from the Fenwick note to the poem beginning "A plague on your languages, German and Norse":

"A bitter winter it was when these verses were composed by the side of my Sister, in our lodgings at a draper's house in the romantic imperial town of Goslar,

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mann family, under whose roof the Lucy poems perhaps were written, survives in the following documents, hitherto regarded no doubt as very dry, but henceforth not unconnected with romance: "Der Ehrlichen Krämer-Gilde Nahmens-Buch, 1661-1840"; "Vor und Zuname der Einwohner in der Commüne Goslar, Stadt Goslar, 1811"; "Protocollum judiciale in Sachen des Herrn Senators und Tadelamtsverordneten Deppermanns, Klagers, etc., den 21ten Januar, 1794" (Document 1700, fi. 7742); "Gegenrechnung in Sachen des Procurators Volkmar, Beklagter, wider die Frau Senatorinn Deppermaß, Klägerin, Juni 20, 1800"; "Buch der Rathsherrn Goslars"; "Der Ehrlichen Worth und Gewandschneider Gilde Nahmens-Buch"; "Bürger-Rolle von Ostern 1799 ab," über die Stephani Pfarre. There was not much to gladden the eye in any of these documents, save the last. But here was a discovery indeed, and one very much needed to give value to all the others. For at the top of the left-hand pages in this long brown book was written, "Hausbesitzer" (Householders), and at the top of the right-hand pages, "Hausgenossen" (Lodgers); and under No. 107, on the left was the record of Frau Deppermann's death, and on the right:

"JOHANN HEINRICH DEPPERMANN, KAUFMANN
23 Feb. 1801 Bürger geworden
Hr. William Waetsford ein Engländer ist weg"

The line through the name was drawn later, Mr. Vernon tells me, and another hand had added the last two words, *ist weg* (has gone). There is nothing to show when Herr William Waetsford, an Englishman, went away, but of his identity with William Wordsworth there can be no doubt.

* E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," Vol. I., p. 268.

THE HOUSE IN GOSLAR WHERE THE WORDSWORTHS LIVED IN 1798

[Vol. I., p. 366

on the edge of the Hartz Forest. In this town the German emperors of the Franconian line were accustomed to keep their court, and it retains vestiges of ancient splendour. So severe was the cold of this winter, that, when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage which was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say, rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night; but with the protection of a pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's skin bonnet, such as was worn by the peasants, I walked daily on the ramparts, or in a sort of public ground or garden in which was a pond. Here, I had no companion but a kingfisher, a beautiful creature, that used to glance by me. I consequently became much attached to it."

This exasperating reticence about matters of interest, and this insistence on the dog's-skin bonnet, are typical of the Fenwick notes and much other biographical material left by the poet. We are grateful for the kingfisher, however.

On January 4, 1799, Coleridge wrote to Poole: "Wordsworth has left Goslar, and is on his road into higher Saxony to cruise for a pleasanter place; he has made but little progress in the language." Ten days later, in a letter to his wife, he says:* "I hear as often from Wordsworth as letters can go backward and forward in a country where fifty miles a day and night is expeditious travelling! He seems to have employed more time in writing English than in studying German. No wonder! for he might as well have been in England as at Goslar, in the situation which he chose and with his unseeking manners. He has now left it, and is on his journey to Nordhausen." He thinks Wordsworth is hampered by having his sister with him, because the Germans cannot understand a young woman's being given so much freedom, and will not admit the pair to their homes. "Still," he goes on, "male acquaintance he might have had, and had I been at Goslar I would have had them; but W., God love him, seems to have lost his spirits and almost his inclination for it."

* See, for both these letters, "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 271 and 272.

Coleridge left Ratzeburg on February 6, and arrived at Göttingen on the 12th, by way of Hanover. Had the Wordsworths been still at Goslar, he would hardly have passed so near without visiting them. On the other hand, Mr. Gordon Wordsworth informs me that there exists a letter from Dorothy dated "Nordhausen, Feb. 27, '99," from which it is clear that she and her brother had left Goslar on February 23, a Saturday, and, travelling either on foot or in a post-waggon, and sleeping every night in a fresh place, had got as far as Nordhausen, and their evident plan was to continue the process. She says the morning of the 23rd was "a delightful morning," and speaks of the fir-woods. The tone of her letter seems to imply that she, at least, was making this journey for the first time. Had it not been for this letter, I should have had no hesitation in saying that they left Goslar early in January. There is nothing more till April 23.

Coleridge came to Göttingen provided with letters of introduction to the university librarian and one of the professors, matriculated at once, and plunged into study.* It was here that he received, a few weeks later, the news of his little son Berkeley's death, and in writing to Poole about that sad event, and how it shook his sense of security, he says, April 6: "Some months ago Wordsworth transmitted me a most sublime epitaph. Whether it had any reality I cannot say. Most probably, in some gloomier moment, he had fancied the moment in which his sister would die:

EPITAPH.

A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.
No motion has she now, no force,
She neither hears nor sees:
Mov'd round in Earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees!

* Poole's letters to Coleridge, now in the British Museum, were re-addressed to Göttingen, "beim Puttler Göring, in der Burg Strasse."

The Bishop of Lincoln quotes from two or three unpublished letters of Coleridge to Wordsworth, written while they were both in Germany, which express his longing to be with his friends:* "I am sure," he writes, "I need not say how you are incorporated into the better part of my being; how, whenever I spring forward into the future with noble affections, I always alight by your side." He sends them some experiments he has made in hexameter verse, which were long afterwards included among his printed works. Even through his technicalities there pierces a note of pathos. He is lonely and ill and weak:

William, my teacher, my friend! dear William and dear Dorothea!

* * * * *

William, my head and my heart, dear Poet that feelest and thinkest
Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate sister!
Many a mile, O! many a wearisome mile are ye distant,
Long, long, comfortless roads, with no one eye that doth know us.
O! it is all too far to send to you mockeries idle:
Yea, and I feel it not right! But O! my friends, my beloved!
Feverish and wakeful I lie,—I am weary of feeling and thinking;
Every thought is worn *down*,—I am weary, yet cannot be vacant.
Five long hours have I tossed, rheumatic heats, dry and flushing,
Gnawing behind in my head, and wandering and throbbing about me,
Busy and tiresome, my friends, as the beat of the boding night-spider.

* * * * *

"The last line which I wrote I remember, and write it for the truth of the sentiment, scarcely less true in company than in pain and solitude:

"William, my head and my heart! dear William and dear Dorothea!
You have all in each other; but I am lonely, and want you!"

The Wordsworths were far less constant this winter than Coleridge in their attachment to a place of abode. The Bishop of Lincoln, who was favoured with information which is now lost, is explicit in his statement that they left Goslar on February 10.† He implies that they went pretty far south, "*to a more genial climate*"; for he writes of the poet: "He felt inspired by the change

* "[Memoirs," I. 140.

† *Ibid.*, 143.

of place. When he set forth from this imperial city [Goslar], so dull and dreary as it had been to him, and when the prospect of a transition from its frost and snow to a more genial climate opened upon him, he seemed to be like one emancipated from the thraldom of a prison: it gave life and alacrity to his soul." Clement Carlyon,* an English medical student, arrived at Göttingen on March 22, 1799. Coleridge had arrived on February 12. In the interval the Wordsworths appear to have visited Coleridge. "Soon after Coleridge's arrival at Göttingen," writes Carlyon,† "Mr. Wordsworth and his sister came from Goslar to pay him a visit, and I have been informed, by one well acquainted with the fact, that the two philosophers rambled away together for a day or two (leaving Miss Wordsworth at Göttingen), for the better enjoyment of an entire intercommunion of thought, thereby becoming the whole world to each other, and not this world only, which in their metaphysical excursions was probably but a secondary consideration." Carlyon testifies to Coleridge's admiration for Wordsworth, saying: "When we have sometimes spoken complimentarily to Coleridge of himself, he has said that he was nothing in comparison with him." The visit to which Carlyon refers must have been very brief, and after it the Wordsworths disappear for about eight weeks.

Considering how many a time in their lives they were seized with a sudden and irresistible impulse to wander, and with almost no baggage, it would not be surprising if they made a long journey; and unless we are to suppose that a date in the Fenwick note to the poem entitled "Stray Pleasures" is incorrect, they ventured into France. In that note the poet is represented to have said to Miss Fenwick, speaking of certain floating mills: "I noticed several upon the river Saône in the year 1799, particularly near the town of Chalons, where my friend Jones and I halted a day when we crossed France." When he dictated the

* Clement Carlyon: "Early Years and Late Reflections," I. 16.
† *Ibid.*, 196.

Fenwick notes the aged poet was generally garrulous, often confused, and sometimes indiscreet. It is possible that he was on this occasion referring solely to his expedition with Jones. But the contrary view is not to be lightly discarded. One turns for help to the first 131 lines of Book First of "The Prelude," in conjunction with the first sentence of Book Seventh. But here one meets fresh perplexity. The Bishop of Lincoln and the poet's secretary, Mr. Carter, who attended to the publication of "The Prelude," are entirely responsible for the opinion that Goslar was the "city" to which reference is made in these passages. Reading the lines without their assistance, it is plain that Wordsworth meant London, and was combining, in a manner usual with him, his recollections of more than one occasion. He "long had pined, a discontented sojourner," there, before going to Racedown; and the rest of the vague narration appears to refer to his movements after returning to England from Germany.*

Coleridge found at Göttingen an agreeable circle of English students, several of whom were Cambridge men. He was known even then as a "noticeable" man, the very adjective that Wordsworth applied to him years afterwards in the stanzas beginning "Within our happy Castle there dwelt One." And even his English companions, Chester, two brothers named Parry, Green, and Clement Carlyon, the last of whom wrote a prolix account of their adventures together, have received from association with him a certain interest for posterity. He was admitted to the society of his professors, and became intimate with at least one German student, a son of Professor Blumenbach. With this young man he made many excursions far and near, and engaged in endless debates, which usually turned into monologues. As is frequently the case with travellers in their first year abroad, the contrast between foreign ways and the customs of his own country

* Perhaps the Bishop of Lincoln's statements in "Memoirs," I. 143-144, were based entirely (except the date February 10) upon a mistaken interpretation of "The Prelude."

brought out his latent chauvinism. He declaimed against French politics and German religion, even arguing with the celebrated theologian Eichhorn.* Yet though shocked at the neglect of religious worship which prevailed among the students, both English and German, he never went to church, as one of the Cambridge men reports. Walking with his comrades on the well-shaded city wall or tramping through the neighbouring forests, he edified them with long discourses on ecclesiastical history, "gravelled the pastors of the German Church," recited and expounded his own poems, read and showed them his tragedy "Osorio," and in every way, through jest and earnest, played like a magician upon their simpler natures. Coleridge could not be suppressed, but Wordsworth, with those "unseeking manners" of his and that love of quiet, left scarcely a trace of his presence in Goslar. On April 23, 1799, Coleridge wrote to his wife:†

"Surely it is unnecessary for me to say how infinitely I languish to be in my native country, and with how many struggles I have remained even so long in Germany! I received your affecting letter, dated Easter Sunday; and had I followed my impulses, I should have packed up and gone with Wordsworth and his sister, who passed through (and only passed through) this place two or three days ago. If they burn with such impatience to return to their native country, *they* who are all to each other, what must I feel with everything pleasant and everything valuable and everything dear to me at a distance—here, where I may truly say my only amusement is—to labour!"

In a letter to Poole, dated May 5, he writes:‡

"Wordsworth and his sister passed through here, as I have informed you. I walked on with them five English miles, and spent a day with them. They were melancholy and hypp'd. W. was affected to tears at

* See a letter from one of the Parrys in Carlyon's "Early Years and Late Reflections," I. 100.

† E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 288.

‡ The original manuscript of this letter and that of April 6 are in the British Museum.

the thought of not being near me—wished me, of course, to live in the North of England near Sir Frederic Vane's great library. . . . W. was affected to tears, very much affected. But he deemed the vicinity of a library absolutely necessary to his health, nay, to his existence. It is painful to me, too, to think of not living near him: for he is a *good* and *kind* man, and the only one whom in *all* things I feel my superior. . . . I still think Wordsworth will be disappointed in his expectations of relief from reading, without society; and I think it highly probable that where I live there he will live, unless he should find in the North any person, or persons, who can feel with and understand him, can reciprocate and react upon him. My many weaknesses are of some advantage to me; they unite me more with the great mass of my fellow-beings—but dear Wordsworth appears to me to have hurtfully segregated and isolated his being. Doubtless his delights are more deep and sublime, but he has likewise more hours that prey on his flesh and blood."*

We have seen that Wordsworth and his sister passed through Göttingen on their way home, about April 20. Where they resided or travelled in the meanwhile, I do not know. In a letter to Thomas Poole, dated July 4,† Miss Wordsworth writes:

"We found living in Germany, with the enjoyment of any tolerable advantages, much more expensive than we expected, which determined us to come home with the first tolerable weather of the spring. We left Coleridge and Mr. Chester at Göttingen ten weeks ago, as you probably have heard, and proceeded with as little delay as possible, travelling in a German diligence to Hamburg, whence we went down the Elbe in a boat to Cuxhaven, where we were not detained longer than we wished for our necessary refreshment, and we had an excellent passage to England of two days and nights: We proceeded immediately from Yarmouth into the North, where we are now staying with some of our early friends at a pleasant farm on the banks of the Tees.

* "Thomas Poole and his Friends," I. 298; and E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 296.

† "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 366. It will be observed that her statement of the time when they left Göttingen corresponds almost exactly with Coleridge's.

We are very anxious to hear from Coleridge,—he promised to write us from Göttingen, and though we have written twice we have heard nothing of him."*

Clement Carlyon records Coleridge's comings and goings, his excursion to the Brocken in May, his trip to Cassel, his departure for home on June 24, his affectionate references to his wife and children, his expressions of attachment to his country. Coleridge carried out his intention of studying natural history and heard the lectures of Professor Blumenbach on that subject.† He also made considerable additions to his knowledge of German literature and German philosophy.‡ But his poetical activities slackened.

Wordsworth, on the contrary, was more productive during the early months of 1799 than at any previous period of equal length. His mind was thrown back upon his own past. He composed several long pieces of blank verse, which he said in after years were intended as part of "The Prelude." It seems more likely that "The Prelude" was not really planned until a year later. These passages of reminiscence sprang spontaneously from his power of living in the past. His gift of observation, which had been cultivated to an almost dangerous point at Alfoxden, was now half dormant. He gave up, for a time, his researches in psychology. The strain of political excitement was

* Professor Knight is evidently mistaken in saying—"Life of Wordsworth," I. 186—that the Wordsworths remained at Göttingen for about three weeks on their homeward journey. If they had been even a week at Göttingen in April, Clement Carlyon would have mentioned the fact, and made much of it.

† Carlyon's "Early Years and Late Reflections," I. 186.

‡ Considering that Coleridge was to be the chief introducer of German philosophy to the English-speaking world, it is worth observing that before going to Germany he knew nothing about the subject at first-hand. His Notebook, in the British Museum, for the years 1795-1798, shows that of German philosophers he knew only Jakob Boehme, and him through a translation, as A. Brandl remarks from his misspelling of the name. He also mentions a translation of Lavater ("Secret Journal of a Self Observer, or Confessions and Letters from the German of J. C. Lavater"). This translation, by Peter Will, had been published in 1795. See A. Brandl "S. T. Coleridge's Notizbuch aus den Jahren 1795-1798, nach der Originalhandschrift im Britischen Museum," Braunschweig, 1896.

relaxed. Coleridge was not with him to stimulate speculation. He was therefore driven to live upon his memories. He wrote that winter the description of skating on Esthwaite, of the boy hooting to the owls across Windermere, of nutting near Hawkshead. Passing over the varied experiences of the past twelve years, he thought of his old schoolmaster and composed the lines beginning "I come, ye little noisy Crew," and "Matthew" and "The Two April Mornings" and "The Fountain." In two instances he followed methods which he had begun to cultivate at Alfoxden: he composed "The Danish Boy," he tells us, "as a prelude to a ballad-poem never written," and a subtle, deeply reflective poem, "Ruth," likewise in ballad form. The latter is a study of moral evil, prompted and mitigated by the influences of natural beauty. The subject is the abandonment of an innocent woman by her husband, a man of genius and charm. Wild nature, amid whose glories he had roved, made this man indifferent to human feeling and to moral obligation. But to the heart-broken Ruth, nature, with grand impartiality, gave solace in her years of sorrow.

It is a curious theme, and as Wordsworthian as any detail of its treatment. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge applied themselves more than once to the study of seduction. The latter had already written his three poems to Unfortunate Women—"Pale roamer through the night! thou poor Forlorn!" "Maiden, that with sullen brow," and "Myrtle-leaf that, ill besped." There are many points of similarity between Wordsworth's two poems, "The Thorn" and "The Mad Mother," written in 1798, and "Ruth," written early in 1799, the most obvious being that in all of them the poet shows profound sympathy with minds disordered by betrayal, and profound knowledge, too, of the workings of such minds. In the ruin of the faculties which once adapted these poor women to social life, they have preserved, he shows us, a healthful relation to nature. Upon nature they fall back for consolation when hopes of human love have failed Not quite the same subject,

but one very much like it, had engaged his attention in "The Ruined Cottage." This is also true of "The Borderers." The material for "Vaudracour and Julia," although it may not have received substantial form until 1805, was supplied to him in 1792. It, again, is a tale of thwarted love, ending in separation and madness. Wordsworth rarely trusted himself to describe the effects of the passion of love. He knew too well the intensity of his own nature, and feared the result of any slackening of self-control; and of minds abnormal or perverted, or threatened at least with insanity, he had known only too many among his nearest associates.

At Goslar he wrote also that unique ballad, "Lucy Gray." It was founded, he informs us, on a circumstance told him by his sister. Nothing could surpass the simplicity and naturalness of this poem before the next to the last stanza is reached. At that point the suggestion of something preternatural is made, yet without disturbing the sense of reality. This touch is added with marvellous delicacy. The poet was prepared to make it by those studies of the weird which he and Coleridge had pursued at Alfoxden. "Lucy Gray" is a more perfect example of its kind than any other of Wordsworth's contributions to "Lyrical Ballads." It is absolutely free from local and personal associations. It depends little upon the poet's actual experience. His creative energy here, for the first time perhaps, worked through a medium of pure imagination, and on an impulse purely artistic.

"A Poet's Epitaph," dated 1799, is another instance of Wordsworth's immense and rapidly unfolding versatility. The first half of this piece is in a vein of high moral satire—a vein not previously revealed in him; a reader who came upon it unawares might say, "This is by Burns or else by some poet born two or three generations after Burns." On the other hand, the five stanzas beginning

> But who is He, with modest looks,

which describe the true poet's gifts and limitations,

though transcending in boldness and precision any lines previously written by Wordsworth, possess qualities which are immediately recognized as peculiar to him.

The five so-called " Lucy poems," which Wordsworth stated were written in Germany, fill one of the most entrancing pages in our literature. Lovely in themselves, they gain an added interest from the questionings they raise in the mind of every thoughtful reader. Have the poems all one subject? Was Lucy a real person or a creature of imagination? Who was she? What passion and what pain do these lines half confess and half conceal? To say much about them would be to desecrate their tender and exquisite beauty. No lover of poetry would wish to resolve all their mystery. Yet one is obliged to take account of several views which have been held in regard to their meaning. The traditional opinion is that they were inspired by the poet's love for his sister. When we recall the ecstatic language in which she more than once voiced her yearning for him in absence, and how her solicitude hovered over him and lapped him in tenderness when she had regained him, we must admit that if his nature was like hers, this view is not untenable. As we have seen, it is the only guess that Coleridge could make when he read the " sublime epitaph," " A slumber did my spirit seal." Another view is that this Lucy is as purely an ideal creation as the child in his ballad. In that case, we must believe these poems little less than miracles. Taken together, they are unsurpassed for poignancy of passion. The love of woman never inspired utterance more tenderly reverent. If they had no origin in personal experience, we must reckon Wordsworth among the greatest objective or dramatic artists. A third view is the only one which an unprejudiced reading of the poems alone would be likely to suggest: that the poet had loved and lost. From every indication, of feeling, of musical tone, and even of metrical detail, the five pieces, " Strange fits of passion have I known," " She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "I travelled among unknown men," " A slumber did my spirit seal," and

" Three years she grew in sun and shower," appear to have one and the same subject. And, in spite of Fenwick notes and all other external testimony, I am half convinced that the two pieces, " I met Louisa in the shade," and " Dear Child of Nature, let them rail," were conceived at the same time and from the same impulse as " Three years she grew in sun and shower." All attempts to look more closely into the secret have thus far been made in vain. Lucy turned her wheel " beside an English fire "; the " springs of Dove " are in Yorkshire: yet when could the poet, without the knowledge of his friends, have met and wooed, except during his long residence in France? Brief must the vision have been, brief and eternal as the moment in Dante's life where *incipit Vita Nova*. My own opinion is that an actual experience of love and sorrow, quite definite and personal, was the origin of these poems, and that the traits of a real woman, her loveliness, her innocent wildness, were fondly recalled under the name of " Lucy." But the name, I believe, and the several touches of local detail, have slight significance, if any.

When Wordsworth and his sister passed through Göttingen in April, 1799, they had been more than seven months abroad. Their experiences had not been altogether satisfactory. Accustomed to the soft winters of England, they had suffered much from cold, and, unfortunately, did not wait to see a German May steal through the sweet valleys of the Harz. There is no evidence that they acquired any sympathetic knowledge of German life or an intimate acquaintance with the language. They lived very economically, spending far less than Coleridge.*

It has been averred that Wordsworth and Coleridge

* Professor Knight—" Life of Wordsworth," I. 187—apparently has no warrant for stating that the Wedgwoods advanced sums to Wordsworth. Coleridge, of course, enjoyed his annuity from that source, and both the poets received their money from the Wedgwoods' Hamburg agents; but on Wordsworth's part it was probably an ordinary business transaction. See Eliza Meteyard's " A Group of Englishmen," p. 98, for the accounts transmitted to England by the Hamburg firm.

returned from their visit to the Continent cured of their democratic tendencies. To dispel this idea in the case of Coleridge, it is only necessary to read his letters to Poole and Southey written in the autumn of 1799. He is amused to observe the reaction among his acquaintances. Some of them were scampering to cover, in most undignified haste. Charles Lloyd, for one, went over to the aristocrats, and Coleridge, who, to be sure, had reason to distrust him, wrote as follows:*

"Soon after Lloyd's arrival at Cambridge I understand Christopher Wordsworth wrote his uncle, Mr. Cookson, that Lloyd was going to read Greek with him. Cookson wrote back recommending caution, and whether or no an intimacy with so marked a character might not be prejudicial to his academical interests. (This is his usual mild manner.) Christopher Wordsworth returned for answer that Lloyd was by no means a democrat, and as a proof of it, transcribed the most favourable passages from the 'Edmund Oliver,' and here the *affair* ended."

This quotation is sufficient to show why Wordsworth, on his return, avoided his own family. His letters, for the rest of the year, reveal none of his convictions. They have to do chiefly with business matters. Miss Wordsworth, in her letter, already mentioned, to Thomas Poole, of July 4, gives their address as "Mr. Hutchinson's, Sockburn, near Northallerton, Yorkshire." They are undetermined, she says, where to reside, and have no house in view. William wishes to be near a good library, and, if possible, in a pleasant country. She asks Poole to let them know if he hears of a suitable place in his neighbourhood.

Wordsworth wrote anxiously to Cottle about the sale of "Lyrical Ballads." His first letter, undated, was probably written late in May, for he says, "We left

* E. H. Coleridge's "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," I. 311. Lloyd had settled at Cambridge in the autumn of 1798. "Edmund Oliver" was a novel, in which he had offensively introduced a thinly disguised representation of Coleridge, with his foibles and misfortunes. There is evidence in the correspondence between Dorothy Wordsworth and Mrs. Clarkson that Lloyd's father tried to secure all the copies of it.

Coleridge well at Göttingen a month ago." He does not know that Cottle has transferred the book to Arch. "We have spent our time pleasantly enough in Germany," he declares, "but we are right glad to find ourselves in England, for we have learned to know its value."

By June 2 he had heard from Cottle, and expressed his regret at having lost a good opportunity of connecting himself with the publisher Johnson, in whose hands the poems were likely to have had a quicker sale. Cottle was going out of business, and the author desired to know who was to own the copyright. He was in need of money, and asked for the balance due to him. In a letter of June 24, he makes the astounding statement:

"From what I can gather it seems that The Ancyent Marinere has, on the whole, been an injury to the volume; I mean that the old words and the strangeness of it have deterred readers from going on. If the volume should come to a second edition, I would put in its place some little things which would be more likely to suit the common taste."

Nothing is said about how Coleridge might feel if this were done. One cannot imagine the author of the "Ancient Mariner" making such a proposal with reference to the "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" or "The Idiot Boy." No doubt it was based upon an agreement between the two poets; yet one could wish for a more generous way of putting things.

"Lyrical Ballads" had not been badly received. The challenge of its Advertisement had fallen almost unheard in a noisy world. There were few to remark the truth and the audacity of the now famous declaration:

"The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its con-

clusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title."

But there had been one article, which, though not likely to harm the fortunes of the book, was manifestly intended to rebuke the authors. It appeared in *The Critical Review* for October, 1798, and was written by Southey. Its appearance so soon after the publication of the book has given very plausible ground to the opinion that he planned his attack before he saw it, and he has even been charged with persuading Cottle to transfer it to Arch, in order not to include the former in the ruin he intended to make. It has also been suggested that he thought Coleridge was the author of all the poems. His review was certainly neither kind nor fair. He had had many an opportunity of realizing the inferiority of his own genius to that of either one of the joint authors. Only the shallowest self-conceit could have enabled him to brush aside lightly any poetic theory that they might propound. "Of these experimental poems, the most important," he says, "is the Idiot Boy, the story of which is simply this"—and he goes on to anatomize it. It is easy enough to raise a laugh over the "story" of this poem, and over some of the phrases in it, that are so simple as to appear grotesque. But he might have found so much to praise! Instead of this, after quoting some of the most "childish" stanzas, he magisterially pronounces his verdict:

"No tale less deserved the labour that appears to have been bestowed upon this. It resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution. From Flemish artists we are satisfied with such pieces: who would not have lamented, if Corregio or Rafaelle had wasted their talents in painting Dutch boors or the humours of a Flemish wake?"

He is altogether displeased with "The Thorn." Of the "Ancient Mariner" he complains that, though

many of the stanzas are laboriously beautiful, they are in connection absurd or unintelligible. "We do not," he says, "sufficiently understand the story to analyze it." It is strange that a man with any claim to be a poet should entertain the distressing thought of analyzing the "Ancient Mariner"; and there could be nothing more inept than to describe it as "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." Finally, he condescends to admit that "genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit." Curiously enough, he approves of "The Female Vagrant," and he gives high praise to the "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey." He laments that the author stooped to write such pieces as "The Last of the Flock," "The Convict," and most of the ballads. There is an intolerable air of superiority in his concluding paragraph: "The 'experiment,' we think, has failed, not because the language of conversation is little adapted to 'the purposes of poetic pleasure,' but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects. Yet every piece discovers genius, and ill as the author has frequently employed his talents, they certainly rank him with the best of living poets."

Charles Lamb, though he had too readily sided with Lloyd in his quarrel with Coleridge, was disappointed with Southey's article. He thought it unappreciative, and told him so:* "If you wrote that review in 'Crit. Rev.,' I am sorry you are so sparing of praise to the 'Ancient Marinere.'" He also declares "Tintern Abbey" one of the finest poems ever written.

Wordsworth felt the blow more deeply than he would admit. He pretended to care only because the criticism must affect the sale of the book. He exclaims, in a letter to Cottle: "He knew that I published those poems for money, and money alone. He knew that money was of importance to me. If he could not conscientiously have spoken differently of the volume, he ought to have declined the task of reviewing it.'

According to Cottle's account, Wordsworth ascribed the bad sale of "Lyrical Ballads" to two causes—

* E. V. Lucas, "Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI. 130.

" first the 'Ancient Mariner,' which, he said, no one seemed to understand; and, secondly, the unfavourable notice of most of the reviews."* Considering that the authors had disposed of their copyright, we might wonder why Wordsworth should be so anxious about the money loss, did we not also learn from Cottle that the latter had obtained ownership once more of what was regarded as a worthless property, and then given it to Wordsworth, " so that whatever advantage has arisen, subsequently, from the sale of this volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads' . . . has pertained exclusively to Mr. W." Coleridge's claims cannot have been overlooked by either Cottle or Wordsworth, but it is to be regretted that the latter was so ready to attribute the "failure" to Coleridge's share of the work.

Mrs. Coleridge, reflecting, no doubt, her brother-in-law's opinion, wrote to Poole from Bristol, in March, 1799: " The Lyrical Ballads are laughed at and disliked by all with very few exceptions "; and again, on April 2: " The Lyrical Ballads are not liked at all by any." She also added, in a queer little postscript: " It is very unpleasant to me to be often asked if Coleridge has changed his political sentiments, for I know not properly how to reply. Pray furnish me."†

The little book was noticed at some length in *The Monthly Review* for June, 1799, and on the whole unfavourably. Wordsworth did not see this article until several weeks later, but he heard of it. The anonymous writer divided his blame and his even more offensive condescension equally between the poems by Wordsworth and those by Coleridge. He supposed, of course, that they were all written by the same author. He sees in their natural diction only an imitation of an ancient and rude style of ballad verse. In their spirit he detects a dangerous radicalism, the teaching of Rousseau. The " Rime of the Ancient Mariner " is " the strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper." " The Yew-tree " seems a seat for Jean-Jacques. " The

* " Reminiscences," p. 257.

† From manuscript letters in the British Museum.

Female Vagrant" "seems to stamp a general stigma on all military transactions," and the perception of this truth sets the reviewer off on a defence of the supposed necessity of militarism. "In 'The Dungeon,' candour and tenderness for criminals seem pushed to excess," and with a Tory's traditional solicitude for low "rates," the reviewer inquires: "Have not jails been built on the humane Mr. Howard's plan, which have almost ruined some counties, and which look more like palaces than habitations for the perpetrators of crimes?" "The Convict" shows "misplaced commiseration, on one condemned by the laws of his country." This article, like almost everything else published in *The Monthly Review* in the last decade of the eighteenth century, indicates the general alertness to detect and crush all manifestations of the "levelling" spirit. One cannot say that its author was blind to the merits of the book, nor indeed that he was mistaken in thinking he had discovered one of the chief motives of its composition. Why did not Wordsworth boldly accept the challenge? Apart from the supposition—for which we have up to this point seen no evidence—that his political philosophy had already begun to change to a more conservative type, there were reasons inherent in his character. Wordsworth was not one of those men who enjoy combat. Only a self-distrusting or excessively prudent young man could have suppressed, as he did, the Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff. The manifold impressions made upon him by his close view of the French Revolution he kept to himself for many years, and the reception of "Lyrical Ballads," which was, after all, only what might have been expected, made him write timorously to Cottle: "My aversion from publication increases every day, so much so, that no motives whatever, nothing but pecuniary necessity, will, I think, ever prevail upon me to commit myself to the press again."

CHAPTER XVI

GRASMERE AND THE LAKES

THE reader may have been struck more than once in this recital with the long visits Wordsworth made at the houses of his friends. There must have been something peculiarly engaging in his person and his conversation, or he would not have been so often invited to spend weeks and even months with people upon whom he had no claim of kinship. His needs were simple, his habits accommodating, and he spent much of his time out of doors. We have also to remember that the eighteenth century was more leisurely than our own time, and that, owing to the lack of facilities for rapid travel, well-to-do families living at a distance from great centres might often say with truth that the advantage of entertaining was theirs. Guests broke the monotony, and gave young men and women a chance to see someone besides their own relatives. The Hutchinsons, with whom William and Dorothy Wordsworth made their home for nearly eight months in 1799, at Sockburn, were certainly not more than well-to-do, and it is quite possible that the guests, in this case, paid for board and lodging. The family consisted of three brothers—Henry, a sailor; Thomas, a farmer, about twenty-six years old; and George—and three sisters—Mary, Sarah, and Joanna, aged respectively twenty-eight, twenty-four, and nineteen. They had spent part of their childhood at Penrith, where the acquaintance with the Wordsworths had begun. Thomas, at the age of sixteen, had inherited the stock on a farm at Sockburn, which is in the county of Durham, near the border of Yorkshire, about seven miles south of Darlington.

He now rented this farm, and his sisters lived with him there. It was a pleasant place, on the banks of the River Tees. The young people were nearly of an age. They had known one another from childhood. Mary Hutchinson, as we have seen, had gone to visit Dorothy Wordsworth at Racedown—a long and tedious journey.

There are few traces in his poems of Wordsworth's life at Sockburn. Nearly all the short pieces which he dated 1799 were composed before he left Germany. The Bishop of Lincoln quotes two letters from Coleridge,* which show that Wordsworth had already communicated to his friend the great plan which now filled his mind. Coleridge was to be addressed in a poem. But there was to be another and greater poem, a life-work, a masterpiece, and with characteristic self-forgetfulness, he entreats Wordsworth to attend chiefly to this task. The first of these letters is of the utmost importance, as being perhaps the seed from which grew more than one book of "The Excursion," and as defining Coleridge's state of mind, and perhaps Wordsworth's too, with reference to what we may term the Revolutionary faith. This letter is said to have been addressed to Wordsworth in the summer of 1799. It says:

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do entreat you to go on with 'The Recluse'; and I wish you would write a poem in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*. It would do great good, and might form a part of 'The Recluse,' for in my present mood I am wholly against the publication of any small poems."

This is not the language of a man who has himself given up striving for his old ideals, and we know what

* "Memoirs," I. 159. There is, besides, a letter from Coleridge to Poole, in the British Museum, written at Exeter, September 10, 1799, in which Coleridge says: "I have heard from W. Wordsworth. He is ill, and seems not happy. Montague has played the fool, I expect, with him in pecuniary affairs. He renounces Alfoxden altogether."

they were. And this we may hold, notwithstanding a manuscript Discourse by Coleridge, now in the British Museum, in which he criticizes the Godwinian theories, though without naming their author. He denounces naked reason and exalts the affections, and speaks of " infidelity and its almost inseparable concomitant, relaxation of domestic ties," quite in the vein of pulpit thunderers. But the real nature of the discourse is shown by the superscription: " Written for whom I neither know or care, as a College Commemoration Sermon, Oct. 6, 1799." It was evidently composed for sale to some not very scrupulous clergyman. Under date of October 8, 1799, at Stowey, the ingenious author has added, below the title, that though one side is " all too hugely beangel'd, the other all too desperately bedevil'd, yet spite of the flattery and spite of the caricature, both are likenesses."

In the second letter, dated October 12, Coleridge says:

" I long to see what you have been doing. O let it be the tail-piece of ' The Recluse !' for of nothing but ' The Recluse ' can I hear patiently. That it is to be addressed to me makes me more desirous that it should not be a poem of itself. To be addressed, as a beloved man, by a thinker, at the close of such a poem as ' The Recluse,' a poem *non unius populi*, is the only event, I believe, capable of inciting in me an hour's vanity—vanity, nay, it is too good a feeling to be so called; it would indeed be a self-elevation produced *ab extra*."

Coleridge had evidently not yet seen even the beginning of " The Prelude," and thought of it as a slight undertaking compared with " The Recluse "—as a sort of dedication to himself of that larger work. Wordsworth, we may suppose from these incitements, was going on with the task he had begun to plan in Germany, writing " The Prelude," and looking ahead to what afterwards he called " The Excursion."

In a letter dated September 2* he invited Cottle to join him in the north, and accompany him on a tour, which was to include the curiosities in the neighbour-

* Cottle's " Reminiscences," p. 258; " Memoirs," I. 148.

hood of Sockburn, and then Cumberland and Westmorland. By curiosities he means natural objects of interest. As at Orleans what he thought most worthy of record was a bubbling spring, so here, he cared more for waterfalls, gorges, peaks, and dales, than for the works of man. Coleridge had come back from Germany in July, and the visit was deferred until he could be of the party. He was in poor health, suffering terribly from rheumatism, sleeplessness, and indigestion, and probably aggravating these evils with opium.* The problem of supporting his family was crying for solution. He naturally went first to Stowey, not only to comfort his wife, but to receive comfort himself from the ever-helpful Poole. Here he and Southey patched up their broken friendship. Towards the end of August the Coleridges went to Ottery St. Mary, where old Mrs. Coleridge and her son George, a clergyman, were living. In October Coleridge turned up in Bristol, and induced Cottle to accompany him to the north to see Wordsworth. Anxious though he was to be known to posterity as a friend and patron of the great poets, and a source of knowledge about their lives, Cottle has caused endless confusion by his inaccuracy, sometimes apparently wilful. The exact date of this journey cannot be determined from anything he has written, and I surmise, from the brevity of his account at this point, that he was not treated with as much deference as he thought he deserved. Coleridge had not left Stowey on October 15.†

In an undated letter from Wordsworth to his sister, we have a summary account of the journey taken by the three young men. Cottle dropped out at Greta Bridge,

* Campbell's "Life of Coleridge," p. 104.

† "Letters of S. T. Coleridge," edited by E. H. Coleridge, p. 307; J. Dykes Campbell, in his "Life of Coleridge," p. 105, says: "He had received alarming accounts of Wordsworth's health, and on the 26th October, in company with Cottle, he arrived at Sockburn, where the Wordsworths were residing with their old friend Tom Hutchinson. Fortunately, the cause of alarm had passed away, and almost immediately the three visitors started on a tour of the Lake country." He refers to Cottle's "Reminiscences" as his source, but I cannot find the passage in that chaos of a book.

before they were fairly started. John Wordsworth took his place, at Temple Sowerby. The party then, entering the Lake country at Bampton, proceeded along Hawes Water, and crossed the mountains to Windermere, by way of Long Sleddale and Troutbeck. They went over to Hawkshead. The brothers noticed great changes among the people since they had left the region. It was Coleridge's first visit. Next day they went through Rydal to Grasmere, where they remained a few days. John left them almost immediately. They climbed with him to the top of Grisedale Pass, and said farewell in sight of Ullswater. " Coleridge," says William, " was much struck with Grasmere and its neighbourhood. I have much to say to you. You will think my plan a mad one, but I have thought of building a house there by the lake side. John will give me £40 to buy the ground. There is a small house at Grasmere empty, which, perhaps, we may take; but of this we will speak."* The two poets lingered in these lovely places until November 15 at least.†

On the 10th, writing to Southey from Keswick, Coleridge says: " I was called up to the North by alarming accounts of Wordsworth's health, which, thank God! are but little more than alarms." He states further that he intends to return thence to London, having received by accident, in the Lake country, " a sort of offer of an agreeable kind," which will enable him and his wife to live in London four or five months. This was a proposal from Daniel Stuart to write political articles for *The Morning Post*. He first returned, however, to Sockburn, and went thence by coach to London, arriving November 27.‡

Wordsworth seems to have remained longer in the Lake country, for, writing to Coleridge several weeks later, he says:§ " I arrived at Sockburn the day after you quitted it. I scarcely know whether to be sorry or

* " Memoirs," I. 150. There is no indication to whom the letter was written.

† Campbell's " Life of Coleridge," p. 312, footnote. ‡ *Ibid.*, 105.

§ " Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 445.

not that you were no longer there, as it would have been a great pain to me to have parted with you. I was sadly disappointed in not finding Dorothy. Mary was a solitary housekeeper and overjoyed to see me."

Wordsworth and Coleridge spent nearly a month together, on this tour, in the closest intercourse, renewing their old love and rekindling the flame of poetic inspiration, which, in Wordsworth's case at least, was soon to glow more brightly than ever. It was one more of those epochs in his life, like the old Alfoxden days, when his heart grew strong with faith in his own powers, and his mind opened to fresh influences. He was subject to great physical and mental depression; composition exhausted him; the physical act of writing made him ill; if left long to himself, he doubted his own powers. Many of the poems he composed during that lonely winter in Germany have a strange inwardness, approaching melancholy. On his return he betrayed undue concern about the success of "Lyrical Ballads," amounting almost to petulance. There is evidence that he was distressed for want of money. Basil Montagu appears to have been remiss in paying for his son's expenses.

All these clouds were blown away when Coleridge burst upon him like a riotous wind. His courage revived. He took a larger view of his future tasks When alone with Dorothy, he observed and penetrated the minute particulars of nature. With Coleridge to stimulate his synthetic powers, he saw things in their connection with one another. Even had it not been Coleridge, with his iridescent imagination, but only some ordinary disciple of Kant, the contact would have been invigorating, for analysis had gone to an almost perilous length, and the time had come when a fresh speculative impulse was needed, a fresh impulse to synthesize, to view nature and mind under the aspect of their eternal coexistence.

It must have given him great satisfaction to draw together so many of the best influences of his past life. First there was the group at Sockburn; then, with his best friend at his side, he listened once more to the

voices of the hills. Coleridge, too, heard these voices with a sympathetic ear. He wrote to Dorothy from Keswick:

"You can feel, what I cannot express for myself, how deeply I have been impressed by a world of scenery absolutely new to me. At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Haweswater, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears; and, the evening approaching, Derwent-water in diversity of harmonious features, in the majesty of its beauties, and in the beauty of its majesty . . . and the black crags close under the snowy mountains, whose snows were pinkish with the setting sun, and the reflections from the rich clouds that floated over some and rested upon others!—it was to me a vision of a fair country: why were you not with us?"

And of John Wordsworth, the sailor brother, he wrote: "Your brother John is one of you; a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, a swift instinct of truth and beauty: he interests me much."*

Having made the happy choice of a home at Grasmere, Wordsworth and his sister remained only about three weeks longer at Sockburn. They set out for their new abode on December 17, and reached Grasmere on the 20th, sleeping on the way at Askrigg, Sedbergh, and Kendal.† Starting early in the morning, and crossing the Tees in the Sockburn fields by moonlight, they travelled as far as Wensley Dale on horseback, Dorothy mounted "behind George." They rode ten miles to the River Swale, four more to Richmond, and eight more into Wensley Dale, where they parted from their friends with sorrowful hearts. Thence they proceeded on foot

* "Memoirs of Wordsworth," I. 149.

† See the letter from Wordsworth to Coleridge, dated Christmas Eve, Grasmere, printed in "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," III. 445, together with the note supplied by Mr. Gordon Wordsworth. What the Bishop of Lincoln printed in the "Memoirs" and Professor Knight in his "Life of Wordsworth," and also in the first appendix to "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," was taken from a rough draft, and not correctly copied. But there are some details in the draft which have not been reproduced in the letter.

to Askrigg, twelve miles, which they reached before six o'clock in the evening. The rough, frozen roads hurt their feet, but the keen air refreshed their spirits, and they were able to walk twenty-one miles next day, with the help of a "lift" in a cart. Notwithstanding a furious wind and snow, they turned aside to see several waterfalls. From Askrigg to Sedbergh they flew before the gale at a rapid pace. Next morning they climbed uphill and down, eleven miles, to Kendal, where they spent the afternoon buying and ordering furniture. On the fourth day, in a post-chaise, they proceeded less lightly to Grasmere. In the fragment of "The Recluse," written a year or two later, the poet thus describes the arrival:

> Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak,
> When hitherward we journeyed, side by side,
> Through bursts of sunshine and through flying showers,
> Paced the long Vales—how long they were—and yet
> How fast that length of way was left behind,
> Wensley's rich Vale and Sedbergh's naked heights.
> The frosty wind, as if to make amends
> For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,
> And drove us onward like two ships at sea,
> Or like two birds, companions in mid air,
> Parted and reunited by the blast.
> Stern was the face of Nature. We rejoiced
> In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew
> A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,
> The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared
> To question us. "Whence come ye? to what end?"
> They seemed to say; "What would ye," said the shower,
> "Wild wanderers, whither through my dark domain?"
> The sunbeams said, "be happy." When this Vale
> We entered, bright and solemn was the sky
> That faced us with a passionate welcoming,
> And led us to our threshold.

Travel-stained and footsore, but full of joy at the new prospect opening before them, this young man and this young woman, whether they realized it or not, were come at last to the haven where they would be. At Grasmere and in its neighbourhood they were to spend the rest of their days. Henceforth they were never-

more to be separated. Here, in perfect union of effort, they were to live according to their ideal. Peace, contentment, unforced and fruitful labour, were to be their portion. Their lives up to this point had not been unfortunate, but they had suffered much anxiety, and William, at least, was one of those who bore the burden of the century at heart. They had wandered far, in body and in spirit, and not the least of their new advantages was being at home again among their native hills. Their genius dedicated them peculiarly to the study and love of nature. That " thrifty goddess " reveals herself at her own chosen moments, and must be waited for and waylaid. Restless and wandering lovers miss her disclosures. At Grasmere, William and Dorothy Wordsworth could at once begin again the life of observation and emotion which in his case at least had been so full during childhood and youth. They were within one long day's walk of Cockermouth, where they were born, and at an equal distance from Penrith. An easy ramble of three hours would bring them to Hawkshead. The familiar rustic speech of the north-west would be heard again, made noticeable and yet endeared by absence. The local types of face and figure, local customs, local traditions, would stir the heart with tender memories, and at the same time yield fresh meaning, after years spent elsewhere.*

The house that Wordsworth had rented was a small stone-and-plaster cottage several hundred feet back from the north-east shore of Grasmere Lake.† It had an unobstructed view of the water, and of Silver How and Loughrigg Fell beyond. Before it ran the old road that connected Grasmere village and Ambleside. Im-

* In a letter to Poole, preserved in the British Museum, Coleridge about this time says: " I would to God I could get Wordsworth to retake Alfoxden. The society of so great a being is of priceless value; but he will never quit the North of England. His habits are more assimilated with the inhabitants there; there he and his sister are exceedingly beloved, enthusiastically. Such differences do small sympathies make, such as voice, pronunciation, etc."

† According to manuscript note by Dr. Joseph Hunter, in the British Museum, the rental was £8 a year.

mediately behind it rose the first slopes of Rydal Fell, which is a spur of mighty Fairfield. Along the margin of the lake, on the one hand, extended a large grove of oak-trees; on the other, a few level enclosures of meadow-land stretched for somewhat less than half a mile to the ancient church and the first dwellings of the village. The cottage was rough-cast with white lime, and gleamed hospitably upon the sight of a traveller approaching it from Kendal and Windermere. It had formerly been an inn, The Dove and Olive Branch,* and is now known as Dove Cottage. The Wordsworths, however, spoke of it for some years as Town-end, which was the local name. It was even smaller than at present. De Quincey describes the interior as he saw it in 1807:

"A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and in the summer and autumn with a profusion of jasmine and other fragrant shrubs. . . . I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire.

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and, in other respects, pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room; and such occasionally it was."†

Besides these two fair-sized rooms, which looked towards the highway and the lake, there were, on the

* See Wordsworth's poem, "The Waggoner."

† "Autobiography," chap. iii.

DOVE COTTAGE FROM THE FRONT

From a photograph by Walmsley

ground-floor, a bedroom and a little dark kitchen or laundry, and on the upper floor one or two bedrooms, and a diminutive study or sitting-room. There were a few feet of ground in front, between the cottage and the road. At the back was a steep little orchard. Between its piled rocks a few apple-trees shaded a tiny spring. Shrubs and flowers growing at the higher end of the orchard laughed in at the upper windows of the cottage, so small was the space and so sharp the pitch of the ground. Beyond the back wall rose the mountain, and one might continue in a straight line for half a day without encountering any other habitation. For those who have never been in the Lake country, it may not be amiss to say that the valleys are very small, seldom more than a few fields across, and carefully cultivated, while the mountains that divide them are high in comparison, their lower slopes often richly wooded, their upper flanks generally bare of trees, and covered with close elastic turf, while their summits are composed of jagged rocks. More than a score of lovely lakes and romantic tarns lie bosomed in the vales or set like jewels among the hills. The entire region is so small that from Grasmere as a centre a good walker can reach any point on its circumference in a day. Yet it is so diversified and so full of exquisite detail, that a lifetime would not suffice to acquaint a person with all its natural beauties. These are in no small measure due to the enormous rainfall, which keeps the water-courses shouting all the year round, and causes grass and moss to clothe every rock and tree-trunk with verdure.

The influx of tourists had just begun, and was not very large. Only a small part of the population was as yet composed of wealthy retired families. Grasmere itself was a scattered group of humble cottages. There were almost none beside the lake except Wordsworth's. In deeper seclusion in the valley heads, such as Easedale and Langdale, folk still lived oblivious of the outer world, preserving ancient manners and forms of speech. On all the long stretch of road, seventeen miles or so, between Ambleside and Keswick, there appear to have

been at first only two or three households with whom the new-comers could associate on something like an equal footing as respects education. But they probably did not consider this a drawback. The dalesmen were a respectable, intelligent, neighbourly race; the state of society was wholesome; there were other planes of intercourse no less inviting than those afforded by learning and polite convention.

At first the new inhabitants of Town-end, or Dove Cottage, probably lived more simply than even they had ever done before. They had few possessions; it was no easy matter to go to Kendal or Penrith for supplies; of money they had at this juncture almost none. Yet on Christmas Eve Wordsworth sat down, in a most cheerful frame of mind, and wrote a long letter to Coleridge. The house, he said, was almost empty, but they hoped to make it comfortable. They had caught colds, to be sure, and the chimneys drew badly, but there was compensation in planning for next spring. His sister was especially pleased with the orchard: "In imagination she has already built a seat, with a summer shed, on the highest platform in this our little domestic slip of mountain. The spot commands a view, over our house, of the lake, the church, Helmcrag, and two-thirds of the vale." He intends to enclose the two or three yards of ground between the house and the road, and to plant flowers there. "Am I fanciful," he asks, "when I would extend the obligation of gratitude to insensate things? May not a man have a solitary pleasure in doing something gratuitously for the sake of his house, as for an individual to which he owes so much?" They intend to keep no servant, but have engaged a woman to do some of the housework by the day. He says they have found the people in the neighbouring cottages "uniformly kind-hearted, frank, and manly, prompt to serve, without servility." He hopes for skating on Rydal Water, and has begun the composition of a new poem, on some subject already discussed with Coleridge.

The year 1800 was one of the most prolific of all Words-

worth's years. In it he probably finished the first and second books of "The Prelude," besides composing that great fragment of "The Recluse" which was not published in full until 1888, and many other poems, inspired by his new surroundings, among them "The Brothers," "Michael," and "The Pet Lamb." It is pleasant to observe that he, who had been the recipient of much hospitality, proved hospitable himself as soon as he had a home to offer to his kindred and friends. His brother John, the sailor, spent a large part of this year with him. Coleridge, too, was more than once a guest at Dove Cottage in 1800. He had gone, as we have seen, from Sockburn to London, where he arrived November 27, and settled with his family. For nearly three months he wrote for Stuart's paper, *The Morning Post*. He then gave up his engagement, in order to work at his translation of Schiller's "Wallenstein."* In February Mrs. Coleridge and their son Hartley left London, and Coleridge spent a month, perhaps two months, with the Lambs. From their house Coleridge wrote to Poole, in March: "Certainly no one, neither you or the Wedgwoods, although you far more than anyone else, ever entered into the feelings due to a man like Wordsworth, of whom I do not hesitate in saying that, since Milton, no one has *manifested* himself equal to him."†

He wrote to Josiah Wedgwood, on April 21, from Dove Cottage again: "To-morrow morning I send off the last sheet of my irksome, soul-wearying labour, the translation of Schiller"; and on May 21 he wrote from Poole's house to Godwin: "I left Wordsworth on the 4th of this month; if I cannot procure a suitable house at Stowey, I return to Cumberland and settle at Keswick."‡ Campbell states that no house being procurable at Stowey, Coleridge "took his wife and child to Dove Cottage," where they all remained "from the 29th

* J. Dykes Campbell's "Life of S. T. Coleridge," p. 110.

† "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 7.

‡ See Campbell's "Life of S. T. Coleridge," p. 112; Mr. E. H. Coleridge's "Letters from the Lake Poets to Daniel Stuart," p. 7; and C. Kegan Paul's "William Godwin: his Friends and Contemporaries," Vol. II., p. 3.

June until the 24th July, when they moved into Greta Hall " at Keswick.* During part of this visit Coleridge was ill, with what he described as rheumatic fever, but notwithstanding every disability, he was again braced by contact with Wordsworth. It was comparatively easy for him to begin great undertakings anywhere; under Wordsworth's influence he sometimes brought them to a successful conclusion. In September, 1800, he wrote to Sir Humphry Davy (?) from Keswick: " I abandon poetry altogether. I leave the higher and deeper kinds to Wordsworth, the delightful, popular, and simply dignified to Southey, and reserve for myself the honourable attempt to make others feel and understand their writings, as they deserve to be felt and understood." †

It was an occasion of reverent delight when Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, the poet's grandson, placed in my hand the little account-books which contain Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. She is to me the most delightful, the most fascinating woman who has enriched literary history. Poetry owes to her more than it owes to any other person who was not actually a great poet. Had Petrarch not met Laura, he might, one feels, have sung another woman's praise. We shall never know how much of Dante's Beatrice was pure abstraction. Dorothy Wordsworth was to her brother not only an inspiration, but a helper in many ways. Her love and solicitude followed everywhere the hesitating steps of Coleridge, and what she was to him one can hardly ven

* I am not sure that the Coleridges stayed at Dove Cottage. In Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal she mentions inquiring about lodgings for Coleridge on June 2 and 10. Afterwards, in summing up the events between June 27 and July 26, she says: " On Sunday Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge and Hartley came. . . . They staid with us three weeks, and till the Thursday following, from 1st till the 23rd of June." Professor Knight is correct (" Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals," I. 43) in his calculation that it was really from Sunday, June 29, to Thursday, July 24, that they stayed; but it is not certain, though probable enough, that they were inmates of the cottage all that time. See Coleridge's letter to Josiah Wedgwood, July 24, in Cottle's " Reminiscences," p. 435; and " Letters from the Lake Poets to Daniel Stuart," p. 11.

† From "Letters hitherto uncollected by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by Colonel W. F. Prideaux, 1913. Printed for private circulation. British Museum copy.

ture to surmise. Her Grasmere Journal is full of incomplete poetry, the star-dust of poetry still unpolarized, pollen of the flowering fields, a something midway between daily experience and immortal art. The first entry is dated May 14, 1800. It is evident from the very first page that the idyll of Racedown and Alfoxden still goes on unbroken, the same enthusiastic devotion to her brother, the same exact and loving study of nature, the same sense of being in a fresh, wonderful world. Yet a shadow appears to have fallen across her happy spirit, causing tears, but no complaints. She begins to write on a day when William has left her to return to Mary Hutchinson in Yorkshire. She is too brave to make a confidant even of her diary, but loneliness no doubt drove her to write: "Wm. and John set off into Yorkshire. . . . My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W. when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. . . . The valley very green; many sweet views up to Rydale, when I could juggle away the fine houses; but they disturbed me, even more than when I have been happier. . . . I resolved to write a journal of the time, till W. and J. return, and I set about keeping my resolve, because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give Willam pleasure by it when he comes home again. . . . Oh, that I had a letter from William!"

The next day, she writes, after a solitary ramble round the lake, at the foot of Loughrigg Fell: "Grasmere very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight. It calls home the heart to quietness. I had been very melancholy. In my walk back I had many of my saddest thoughts, and I could not keep the tears within me. But when I came to Grasmere I felt that it did me good. I finished my letter to M. H."—*i.e.*, to Mary Hutchinson. *It calls home the heart to quietness.* Was not she, too, a poet?

Within the next few days she read several plays of Shakespeare and some ballads, worked busily in house and garden, listened sympathetically to tales of woe from poor travellers, watched closely the varying stages of the season, and, above all, waited for letters. Her walks never took her far from the cottage, especially as the time drew near when William might possibly return. She would rather sacrifice the glory of the long summer twilights than fail to be at home to greet him if he came unannounced. She wrote to her brothers Christopher and William, to the Hutchinsons, to Coleridge, to Charles Lloyd. She fell in love with the lower end of Easedale and the rocky knoll of Butterlip How, and spent much time sitting there and on the slopes beside Rydal Water. Once, upon the side of Loughrigg, her heart, she says, dissolved in what she saw. On Wednesday, June 4. 1800, she writes: "I lingered out of doors in the hope of hearing my brother's tread." On Friday, hurrying home at night from the post-office at Ambleside, "I slackened my pace," she says, "as I came near home, fearing to hear that he was not come. I listened till after one o'clock to every barking dog." Next day: "I did not leave home, in the expectation of Wm. and John, and sitting at work till after 11 o'clock I heard a foot at the front of the house, turn round, and open the gate. It was William! After our first joy was over we got some tea. We did not go to bed till 4 o'clock in the morning, so he had an opportunity of seeing our improvements."

Perhaps it was during this absence that Wordsworth became engaged to Mary Hutchinson, though the subject is never directly mentioned. Coleridge had been more or less expected for some time, and the uncertainty continued till June 29. John Wordsworth came home a day later than William. We hear no more of sadness. It is refreshing to read of the poet fishing, setting pike floats, and cutting down a tree, and notable indeed is the information that "Wm. stuck peas." The nebular stuff of a poem is in Dorothy's elaborate account of "a very tall woman, tall much beyond the

measure of tall women," whose children begged and told a lie, and whom she saw again, " creeping with a beggar's complaining foot." It is evident she is treasuring up all the details of the story and all the effective terms of speech that occur to her, as material for a poem, and nearly two years later, when her brother wrote "Beggars," he used this material. Such culled terms as " the whining voice of sorrow " and " creeping with a beggar's complaining foot " show that she had lately been reading the old dramatists, and are evidences of an effort on her part; but generally the charm of her phrases springs from their simplicity. The deep calm of her happiness sometimes changed to a more tumultuous joy, an ecstasy of feeling. This she nearly always condensed into a sentence or two; for example, " Grasmere looked so beautiful that my heart was almost melted away."

But her usefulness to her brother was not limited to the higher offices of comforter, counsellor, provider, and critic. She had already begun her lifelong occupation of copying his poems. The ordinary domestic cares—housekeeping, cooking, mending, papering rooms, gardening, etc.—sat lightly on her. What there was to do she did, but had plenty of time to spare for reading and walking. Seven months slipped away before they unpacked their " Somersetshire goods."

At the end of July, Coleridge came over from Keswick for a short visit, bringing the second volume of Southey's " Annual Anthology," which contained a number of his own poems. He had been able to keep away just one week. The men went to bathe, and afterwards they all sailed on the lake, letting the boat take its own course while they read poetry. Wordsworth appears to have been stimulated by the presence of Coleridge to finish " The Brothers," one of the most ambitious poems he had hitherto written, and one which most daringly exemplifies his own theories. It was his habit, as is well known, to compose while walking in the open air, and he retained hundreds of lines in his mind, often for many weeks, before they were completed. On Friday, August 1, the day after Cole-

ridge came, Dorothy writes: " In the morning I copied The Brothers. Coleridge and Wm. went down to the lake. They returned, and we all went together to Mary Point [so named in honour of Mary Hutchinson], where we sate in the breeze, and the shade, and read Wm.'s poems. Altered The Whirlblast, etc. We drank tea in the orchard." How young Wordsworth was, to have written such a poem as " The Brothers "!

Wordsworth seems to have returned to Keswick the next day with Coleridge, and to have stayed there till the 6th, the supplies at Greta Hall being meanwhile enriched by a large basket of peas sent over by the anxious sister. William had not been at home again for more than two days when they both walked over the mountains to Wattendlath, and found themselves by eleven o'clock at night—at Coleridge's house! The next day Dorothy walked with Coleridge in the Windy Brow woods, and the next day, being Sunday, she records the fact that " the C.'s went to church." As J. Dykes Campbell mischievously notes, this upsets the general opinion that Coleridge never did such a thing. It was a week or two before they could tear themselves away, and the record of the visit is very incomplete. The brother and sister took at least one walk together along the Cockermouth road, their faces set towards the place of their birth, and perhaps their minds were on the old times there, though she remarks that William " was altering his poems." This expression recurs again and again in the Journal, with a frequency that would be alarming did we not know how much poetry he finally allowed to pass on to the printer. One might otherwise have feared that he might keep altering it for ever; and, indeed, gauged by a standard of mere time, he exerted himself far more in revision than in the first utterance of a poem. As an example of the extreme care taken with poems while they were going through the press, I will quote here a passage from Mrs. Davy's manuscript Memories of William Wordsworth. Whether it refers to 1800 or 1802 is not clear, and makes no difference:

" *Monday, April* 22, 1850.—I had some talk which interested me much to-day with good Mrs. Nicholson at the post-office, concerning Mr. Wordsworth. She has known him perhaps longer than anyone here, and in her simple, homely, hearty manner does as full justice to his sweet and fine qualities as anyone could do. She went back, in the manner of the old, on her earlier days of acquaintance with the poet and his sister, when they lived at Grasmere, and when, as she said, they would often walk to Ambleside together after dark, in order to repair some omission or alter some arrangement in the proof-sheets of his Poems, which had been posted for the press. ' At that time,' said Mrs. N., ' the mail used to pass through at one in the morning, so my husband and me used to go early to bed; but when Mr. and Miss W. came, let it be as late as it would, my husband would get up and let them in and give them their letter out of the box, and then they would sit up in our parlour or in the kitchen, discussing over it and reading and changing till they had made it quite to their minds, and then they would seal up the packet again, and knock at our bed-room door, and say, " Now, Mr. Nicholson, please will you bolt the door after us? Here is our letter now for the post. We'll not trouble you any more this night." And, oh, they were always so friendly to us and so loving to one another.' "

On Sunday, August 17, Dorothy says: " William read us The Seven Sisters "—*i.e.*, " The Solitude of Binnorie." A few days later " Wm. read Peter Bell and the poem of Joanna, beside the Rothay by the roadside." The latter piece, like the others included by Wordsworth under the general title of " Poems on the Naming of Places," presents many difficulties to the commentator. If, as is commonly supposed, the Lady of the poem was Mary Hutchinson's sister Joanna, there is no other evidence that she had ever visited Grasmere, and certain it is that she could not have been there in Wordsworth's company eighteen months before the poem was written, as the heroine of the laugh is declared to have been. It was published in 1800. Wordsworth was always purposely and studiously inexact in passages containing personal references to himself and his friends

If biography were to depend entirely upon his poems for the record of his life, the chronology would be hopelessly contradictory. The " Poems on the Naming of Places " show his fine independence of ordinary standards. He was content to write for himself and the small circle about him, and indifferent to the rewards of fame; for he can scarcely have had publication in view, although some of the pieces did appear in the next volume he published. They are examples also, it must be said, of a dangerous tendency to look so closely at small things that he sometimes failed to see them in proper perspective. It is no wonder if many readers found these poems too personal, too particular. Beauties of their own they of course possess, yet few persons would take the trouble to seek these out and do them justice if the entire achievement of their author had not lent interest—a deep and delightful interest—to all his friendships, haunts, and habits.

These remarks are not intended to be applied to " Peter Bell." That great and unique poem, a startling innovation in our literature, is no doubt a stumbling-block to many readers, but no one who even half understands Wordsworth's motives and principles can fail to perceive that it is one of his most characteristic works. In it, fully as much as in any other poem he ever wrote, we have the fruit of those profound studies in psychology which had engaged him for several years. He believed, and modern research has confirmed his opinion, that the science of psychology could be enriched by attention to the particular rather than the general. Since " normal " is only a term by which men assert an undue supremacy for what they deem to be general, it follows that human nature can best be investigated in specific cases, not one of which is ever really normal—that is to say, stamped with all the qualities of any given standard. " Sanity " is a mere abstraction. There is no wholly sane individual. And for certain purposes of investigation more can be learned from persons distinctly below the average of intelligence or of moral strength than from those whose natural propensities are overlaid with

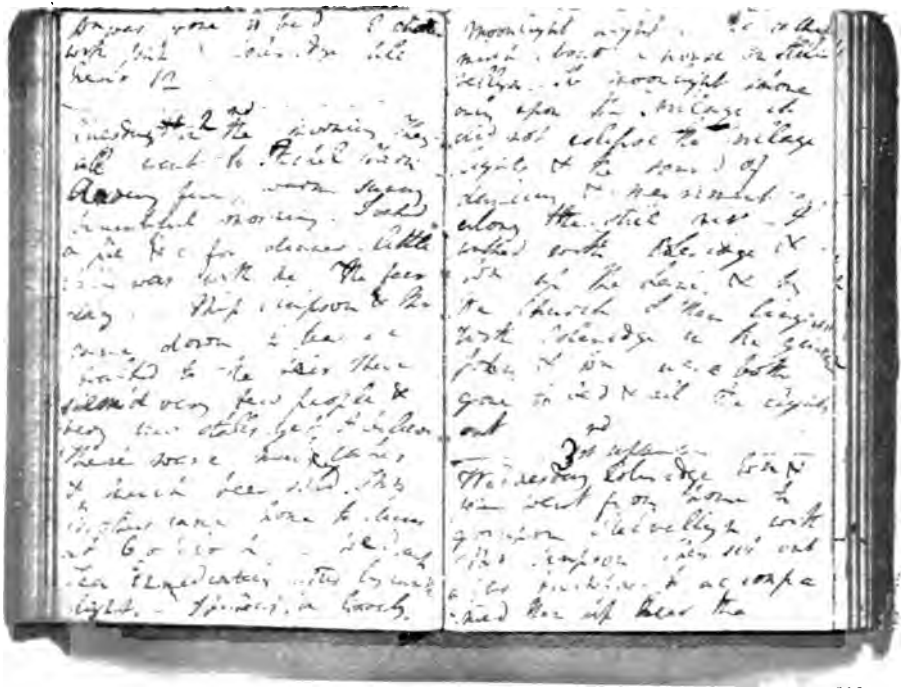
acquired wisdom and restrained by vigorous will-power. The oculist paralyzes the accommodation of the eye in order to see into its depths. Just so, the student of the mind can often see more plainly the recesses of our nature when it lies helplessly deprived of the immunities provided by strong volition. And what he sees there is not always unlovely or without honour to the species. Much rare information, many a deep vision and keen feeling, can be found in " defectives," as we call them now. Some things have been hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. Wordsworth took the pains to explain that his Idiot Boy was precisely what we term a " defective." In " Peter Bell " he wished, in particular, to illustrate the influence of natural objects upon a soul amenable to superstition, but to few of the other means by which the race has been educated from animal grossness up to reason and self-control. It may perhaps be disputed whether he was wise to indulge, here and there, in a kind of grotesque simplicity, which looks like humour, but is not. Both he and Coleridge worked occasionally in this vein. There are traces of it, and wholly admirable, in the "Ancient Mariner." They had in view a certain strain of tragic rudeness which occurs sometimes in stories invented by children and in many old ballads.

There were frequent conferences with Coleridge about the contents of the new and enlarged edition of " Lyrical Ballads." By the most direct route, over Dunmail Raise, the distance between Keswick and Grasmere is fully thirteen miles, and these lovers of the hills were not always content to travel by the road, but sometimes made the arduous détour by way of Wattendlath, or even climbed over mighty Helvellyn. For example, under date of August 31, Dorothy writes: " At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. Wm. was gone to bed, and John also, worn out with his ride round Coniston. We sate and chatted till half-past three." He stayed at Dove Cottage several days at least, and the time was rich in friendly

talk. Coleridge read part of "Christabel." Wordsworth read what he had lately written, and one great result of the visit was that Wordsworth soon afterwards began to toil over his supreme work in prose, the Preface to the 1800 edition of "Lyrical Ballads." This essay, which revived in modern English the grand style of the seventeenth century, and is justly ranked with Sidney's "Defence of Poesie" as one of the noblest pieces of criticism in our language, or in any language, bears deep traces of Coleridge's influence, notwithstanding its thoroughly individual character. The entries in the Journal for the first three days of September tell so much of the dear companionship between the Wordsworths and their friend, that I transcribe the greater part of them. The Mr. Simpson who is mentioned was the clergyman at Wythburn, the tiny hamlet on the Keswick road just beyond Dunmail Raise. The Wordsworths were for ever stopping at his house to rest and drink tea and exchange gossip on their way to and from Keswick, and the Simpsons were often at Dove Cottage. It was just like Coleridge to find a hitherto undiscovered resource in the tiny orchard. And the instances here recorded will serve as well as a dozen others which might have been quoted, to show how he turned night into day.

"*Monday Morning, 1st September.*—We walked in the wood by the lake. W. read Joanna, and the Firgrove, to Coleridge. They bathed. The morning was delightful, with somewhat of an autumnal freshness. After dinner, Coleridge discovered a rock-seat in the orchard. Cleared away brambles. Coleridge went to bed after tea. John and I followed Wm. up the hill, and then returned to go to Mr. Simpson's. We borrowed some bottles for bottling rum. The evening somewhat frosty and grey, but very pleasant. I broiled Coleridge a mutton chop, which he ate in bed. Wm. was gone to bed. I chatted with John and Coleridge till near 12.

"*Tuesday, 2nd.*—In the morning they all went to Stickle Tarn. A very fine, warm, sunny, beautiful morning. I baked a pie, etc., for dinner. Little Sally was with me. The fair-day. Miss Simpson and Mr. came down to tea. We walked to the fair. There seemed very few people and very few stalls, yet I believe there were



FACSIMILE OF TWO PAGES OF DOROTHY WORDSWORTH'S JOURNAL
FOR SEPTEMBER 1, 2, AND 3, 1800

[Vol. I., p. 406

many cakes and much beer sold. My brothers came home to dinner at 6 o'clock. We drank tea immediately after by candlelight. It was a lovely moonlight night. We talked much about a house on Helvellyn. The moonlight shone only upon the village. It did not eclipse the village lights, and the sound of dancing and merriment came along the still air. I walked with Coleridge and Wm. up the lane and by the church, and then lingered with Coleridge in the garden. John and Wm. were both gone to bed, and all the lights out.

"*Wednesday, 3rd September.*—Coleridge, Wm., and John went from home, to go upon Helvellyn with Mr. Simpson. They set out after breakfast. I accompanied them up near the blacksmith's. . . . I then went to a funeral at John Dawson's. About 10 men and 4 women. Bread, cheese, and ale. They talked sensibly and cheerfully about common things. The dead person, 56 years of age, buried by the parish. The coffin was neatly lettered and painted black, and covered with a decent cloth. They set the corpse down at the door; and, while we stood within the threshold, the men, with their hats off, sang, with decent and solemn countenances, a verse of a funeral psalm. The corpse was then borne down the hill, and they sang till they had passed the Town-End. I was affected to tears while we stood in the house, the coffin lying before me. There were no near kindred, no children. When we got out of the dark house the sun was shining, and the prospect looked as divinely beautiful as I ever saw it. It seemed more sacred than I had ever seen it, and yet more allied to human life. The green fields, in the neighbourhood of the churchyard, were as green as possible; and, with the brightness of the sunshine, looked quite gay. I thought she was going to a quiet spot, and I could not help weeping very much. When we came to the bridge, they began to sing again, and stopped during four lines before they entered the churchyard. . . . Wm. and John came home at 10 o'clock."

On September 10, 1800, Dorothy writes to Mrs. Marshall:* "We meditate a journey to the neighbourhood of Scarborough to see our friends the Hutchinsons, who are settled there; we shall then extend our journey further and stop with you at Leeds. Our plan is to

* From a letter belonging to Mr. Marshall.

purchase a taxed cart, which we can have for seven guineas, and hire a horse if we cannot afford to buy one; but this being altogether a very grand scheme, a large sum will be necessary to execute it, and it will depend entirely upon William's success with the booksellers."

Miss Wordsworth entered many a mountain and village household, and shared the joys and sorrows of many a humble family. Her brother, though absorbed in his work, took his part in all these interests. Poor foundered travellers, peddlers, and destitute children, often came to their door for a bit to eat and a small dole. Help was given neither carelessly nor grudgingly, but after close and sympathetic inquiry. The cottage often sheltered some visiting friend, though money and provisions were scarce enough. They lived on terms of great friendliness with their humble neighbours, the Ashburners, performing and accepting a thousand kind acts. Charles Lloyd was living at Ambleside, and sometimes called. The Journal was neglected throughout the middle of September, and written up from memory afterwards. It mentions several calls from "Jones," and finally a week's visit from him, ending September 26. This may have been the Rev. Robert Jones, Wordsworth's old college friend, his companion on his walking trip through France. Coleridge came in on the 26th, and on the 29th John Wordsworth went away to join his ship, the *Earl of Abergavenny*. The farewell took place near Grisedale Tarn, at the top of the pass dividing the vale of Grasmere from the eastern valleys that lead to Penrith. His sister wrote: "Wm. and I parted with him in sight of Ullswater. It was a fine day, showery, but with sunshine and fine clouds. Poor fellow, my heart was right sad. I could not help thinking we should see him again because he was only going to Penrith." The sailor brother had a childlike and lovable nature. He loved poetry and had read deeply, though not widely. He shared the fondness of his older brother and sister for out-door life, and was altogether a cheerful and congenial comrade.

The last sheet of the Notes and Preface to "Lyrical

Ballads" was written out by the faithful amanuensis on September 30, and corrected on October 1, 1800. The next day was spent in well-earned recreation. They went to their lovely haunt on Butterlip How, and looked up into Easedale, where William was wont to compose beside the rushing brook. And Dorothy records a tell-tale fact, in terms perhaps unconsciously amusing, which shows how very human she and her brother were: "We had a pleasant conversation about the manners of the rich; avarice, inordinate desires, and the effeminacy, unnaturalness, and unworthy objects of education." Among the consolations of poverty this form of entertainment counts for a good deal.

On October 3, 1800, realizing that she had under her hand the material for a poem, and perhaps obeying her brother's suggestion, she wrote the following details of an incident which to most persons would have seemed unimportant. Wordsworth did not begin to compose "The Leech Gatherer" till May 3, 1802, but here is its real beginning:

"When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a nightcap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and 'she was a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children.' All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they had been scarce. He supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2s. 6d. per 100; they are now 30s. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broken, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain

till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away."

On October 4 Coleridge came in, very wet, while they were at dinner, and talked till twelve, though he had sat up all the night before, "writing essays for the newspaper." He read them the second part of "Christabel." He read it again next day, and they had "increasing pleasure." No doubt conversation with Coleridge gave Wordsworth fresh ideas, for he and Dorothy spent the morning writing an addition to the Preface. As was generally the case, excessive labour made William very ill, and he went to bed. Coleridge and Dorothy "walked to Ambleside after dark with the letter," no doubt the fresh manuscript of this addition. Coleridge intended to leave them the next day, but did not, and after tea they read "The Pedlar"—*i.e.*, a portion of "The Excursion." It was determined not to print "Christabel" with the "Lyrical Ballads." On the following day Dorothy accompanied Coleridge as far as Mr. Simpson's on his way home. She records the receipt of a five-pound note from Basil Montagu, who was gradually paying what he owed them for the care of his son.

By far the most interesting entries in the Journal for the last three months in 1800 are those which relate how the poem "Michael" was composed. The theme appears to have been suggested to Wordsworth by some actual occurrence. A reaction from his previous interest in the wonderful and supernatural was inclining him to attend strictly to real life. He had now been living long enough among his rustic neighbours to know and appreciate to the full some of their touching domestic tales. The story of "Michael," as it came to him, was connected with a particular spot, hidden in the green bosom of the hills, about two miles from the vale of Grasmere. One fine October day, when the colours of the mountains were "soft and rich with orange fern, the cattle pasturing upon the hilltops, kites sailing in the sky, sheep bleating, and feeding in the watercourses," Dorothy and William "walked up Greenhead Gill in

search of a sheepfold." They found it "in the form of a heart unequally divided," but already falling away. Yet the stones were still lying, a hundred and twelve years later, in much the same shape, and nothing that had happened, of joy or grief, of improvement or destruction, in all this world, had altered the scene in any respect. Only the sky was visible, and the swelling outline and green slopes of Fairfield, and the dashing torrent, and a few boulders. The great poem, apparently so simple in construction and so free from artifice in verse, cost Wordsworth immense toil. He began to compose it immediately after visiting the sheepfold, and returned to the task again and again, wearing himself out, as his sister relates, until on December 9 she writes: "Wm. finished his poem to-day." The great calm of this and other poems was not attained without vast expense of emotion. "He writes," said Dorothy, "with so much feeling and agitation that it brings on a sense of pain."

Meanwhile the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" was being slowly prepared. Coleridge, who was writing for *The Morning Post*, left the work almost entirely to Wordsworth. He would drop in at Town-end for dinner or to spend a few days, coming empty-handed, but abounding in glorious talk. A characteristic record is that of October 22: "Wm. composed without much success at the sheepfold. Coleridge came in to dinner. He had done nothing. We were very merry. C. and I went to look at the prospect from his seat. Wm. read Ruth, etc., after supper. Coleridge read Christabel." The neighbourhood—and it must be remembered that there were scarcely any limits to it—was full of "seats" and "nooks," favourite views and trees and rocks, which this delightful trio loved with childlike attachment. It is a proof of Wordsworth's intense individuality that his Preface to the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" has a style completely his own, for it was written in the intervals of Coleridge's impassioned conversation.

Of this good fellowship we nowhere obtain a better

glimpse than in Coleridge's letter to Humphry Davy, from Keswick, July 25, 1800:*

"W. Wordsworth is such a lazy fellow that I bemire myself by making promises for him: the moment I received your letter, I wrote to him. He will, I hope, write immediately to Biggs and Cottle. At all events, those poems must not yet be delivered up to them, because that beautiful poem, 'The Brothers,' which I read to you in Paul Street, I neglected to deliver to you, and that must begin the volume: I trust, however, that I have invoked the sleeping bard with a spell so potent that he will awake and deliver up that sword of Argantyr which is to rive the enchanter *Gaudyverse* from his crown to his foot. . . . We drank tea to-night before I left Grasmere, on the island in that lovely lake; our kettle swung over the fire, hanging from the branch of a fir-tree, and I lay and saw the woods, and mountains, and lake all trembling, and as it were idealized through the subtle smoke, which rose up from the clear, red embers of the fir-apples which we had collected: afterwards we made a glorious bonfire on the margin, by some elder-bushes, whose twigs heaved and sobbed in the uprushing column of smoke, and the image of the bonfire, and of us that danced round it, ruddy, laughing faces in the twilight; the image of this in a lake, smooth as that sea to whose waves the Son of God had said *Peace!* May God, and all his sons, love you as I do."

Coleridge's joyous impatience burst out in a letter to Josiah Wedgwood, from Keswick, November 1:

"Wordsworth's second volume of Lyrical Ballads will, I hope, and almost believe, afford you as unmingled pleasure as is in the nature of a collection of very varied poems to afford to one individual mind. Sheridan has sent to him too—requests him to write a tragedy for Drury Lane. But W. will not be diverted by anything from the prosecution of his great work."

By this, no doubt, is meant the projected philosophical poem, of which many hundred lines had already been written, at Racedown, at Alfoxden, and in Germany.

* "Fragmentary Remains of Sir Humphry Davy," London, 1858, p. 77.

CHAPTER XVII

WORDSWORTH THE CRITIC

THUS the year 1800 came to a happy end. Grasmere had completely won the poet and his sister. The natural beauty of the place had lifted their spirits to an unwonted height. Their rustic neighbours had gained their respect and affection. Of educated people they had within reach the Simpsons at Wythburn, Charles Lloyd at Ambleside, Thomas Clarkson, the great anti-slavery agitator, and his amiable wife, at Eusemere on Ullswater, and the Coleridges at Keswick. A great period of poetical studies had been rounded out with the completion of "Lyrical Ballads," and the way cleared for work of a different character. Of this latter sort, "Michael" was already done, "The Leech Gatherer" was conceived, and progress had been made with the philosophical poem which was to occupy the coming years.

To speak of the book prepared in 1800 as a second edition of "Lyrical Ballads" is, and always has been, confusing. Wordsworth hoped that its predecessor had gained for him a number of readers,* and he wished to alter some of the poems it contained. From every other consideration, it would have been more proper to give the new book a fresh name. A strain of mystery, a tendency to dwell upon the abnormal or grotesque, and a sense of social discontent, which pre-

* As Mr. Thomas Hutchinson has conjectured, with the approval of W. Hale White ("A Description of the Wordsworth and Coleridge Manuscripts in the Possession of Mr. T. Norton Longman," 1897), the favourable review in *The British Critic* of October, 1799, attributing the whole work to Coleridge, had probably helped to sell some of the edition, of which Cottle had given the copyright to Wordsworth.

dominate in the true "Lyrical Ballads," are less noticeable in the poems added in 1800. One is tempted to suspect, also, that Wordsworth, in his correspondence with the publishers and in other references to the book, unduly subordinates Coleridge to himself. It is true that "Christabel" was not included in the volume, and that, with the exception of the "Ancient Mariner" and "Love," Coleridge's contributions were very slight. He had been expected to furnish more, and Dorothy more than once records her disappointment at his failure to do so. He wrote to his friend Humphry Davy at Bristol, on October 9, 1800, an explanation of Wordsworth's conduct which fails to convince:

"The 'Christabel' was running up to 1,300 lines, and was so much admired by Wordsworth that he thought it indelicate to print two volumes with his name, in which so much of another man's was included; and, which was of more consequence, the poem was in direct opposition to the very purpose for which the Lyrical Ballads were published, viz., an experiment to see how far those passions which alone give any value to extraordinary incidents were capable of interesting, in and for themselves, in the incidents of common life. We mean to publish the 'Christabel,' therefore, with a long blank-verse poem of Wordsworth's entitled 'The Pedlar.'"

As W. Hale White pointed out,* "Christabel" probably never ran to such a length except in the imagination of its author, and the inconsistency of which Coleridge makes so much is not at all evident. Wordsworth was so often obliged, in practical affairs, to treat Coleridge as a child, that he perhaps did injustice to him in this matter. Nevertheless, as is apparent from the correspondence between William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge, on the one hand, with Biggs and Cottle the printers and Longman the publisher, on the other, every arrangement was made with Coleridge's full consent. Among the notes to the first volume of the new edition, however, there was the following criticism of the "Ancient Mariner," ostensibly written by

* *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

Wordsworth, and said by W. Hale White to have been sent to the printers in Dorothy's handwriting. It affects one unpleasantly, as a piece of ungracious frankness. Wordsworth, one feels, ought not to have called attention to the defects of his colleague's work, even though the latter had detected them and considered them important. The note is as follows; it was not reprinted after 1801:

"I cannot refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, though the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the poem a value which is not often possessed by better poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

No doubt this was printed with Coleridge's consent, but he, kind soul, would have been willing to make a public confession of still graver defects. Charles Lamb, it is refreshing to know, took up the cudgels for him, and, replying to Wordsworth point by point, in a letter

written immediately after the volume was published, concludes: "You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see."*

How the printers ever managed to get the book out is a marvel. The manuscript came to them piecemeal in the handwriting of the two poets and Dorothy, not to mention Sara Hutchinson, who was staying at Townend; the punctuation was done in part by Coleridge and in part by Humphry Davy at Bristol; there were numerous changes of text, and some pages were cancelled. The authors were in the Lake country, the printers in the West, the publishers in London. Yet it appeared, not more than a month behind time, in January, 1801.

Recluse though he was, Wordsworth had a way of bursting into the arena of public life when he saw a fit occasion. His zeal for the welfare of his country never slackened, and he was not restrained by false humility, feeling himself entitled by power of intellect to address whomsoever he chose. He sent a copy of the new work to the great Whig statesman, Charles James Fox, who had temporarily withdrawn from politics, and was indulging himself in an immense feast of ancient and modern literature. The gift was accompanied with a long letter, dated January 14, 1801. In this Wordsworth boldly affirms his confidence that he has performed one of the noblest functions of a poet: he has done public service by revealing the instincts and principles of one set of men to another; he has, as we should now say, in the words of Tolstoi, "made that understood and felt which, in the form of an argument, might be incomprehensible and inaccessible," and thereby "united people." The letter not only shows this high consciousness of religious performance, but is remarkable also as indicating a shift in the author's political point of view. Among the sources of distress and moral degradation he no longer mentions militarism, and the

* "The Letters of Charles Lamb," edited by Canon Ainger, Vol. I., p. 164.

Tory measures which drew forth his denunciation seven years before; it is now rather the evils of industrialism and their false palliatives which he attacks, and it is plain that the new Whiggery will not meet with his approval. And no wonder; for the workhouse in 1800 was as horrible as the factory.

"Recently," declares Wordsworth, "by the spreading of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes upon postage, by workhouses, houses of industry, and the invention of soup-shops, etc., superadded to the increasing disproportion between the price of labour and that of the necessaries of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influence of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed." And he adds: "In the two poems, The Brothers, and Michael, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent proprietors of land, here called statesmen, men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population, if these men are placed above poverty. But if they are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying-point for their domestic feeings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing. You, Sir, have a consciousness, upon which every good man will congratulate you, that the whole of your public conduct has, in one way or other, been directed to the preservation of this class of men, and those who hold similar situations. You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor. The two poems,

which I have mentioned, were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. 'Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque, si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.' The poems are faithful copies from nature; and I hope whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may in some small degree enlarge our feeling of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us. I thought, at a time when these feelings are sapped in so many ways, that the two poems might co-operate, however feebly, with the illustrious efforts which you have made to stem this and other evils with which the country is labouring; and it is on this account alone that I have taken the liberty of thus addressing you."*

This way of regarding poetry was thoroughly characteristic of Wordsworth. It was a new way, and Fox, who thought the finest compositions of the eighteenth century were Pope's "Eloisa," Voltaire's "Zaïre," Gray's "Elegy," and Metastasio's "Isacco," failed to see that his correspondent was in earnest; failed to see the point, that is, and thought only of metre. In his long-deferred reply, dated May 25, he says: "The poems have given me the greatest pleasure; and if I were obliged to choose out of them, I do not know whether I should not say that 'Harry Gill,' 'We are Seven,' 'The Mad Mother,' and 'The Idiot,' are my favourites. I read with particular attention the two you pointed out; but whether it be from early prepossessions, or whatever other cause, I am no great friend to blank-verse for subjects which are to be treated of with simplicity." Evidently Fox, contrary to popular opinion, did not have his heart sufficiently near his head, for Coleridge had written to Davy in December:† "It ["Michael"] is of a mild, unimposing character, but

* "Memoirs," I. 170.

† "Fragmentary Remains of Sir Humphry Davy," London, 1858, p. 85.

full of beauties to those short-necked men who have their hearts sufficiently near their heads—the relative distance of which (according to citizen Tourder, the French translator of Spallanzani) determines the sagacity or stupidity of all bipeds and quadrupeds."

Coleridge wrote to Poole in January that by his own advice, and at Longman's expense, copies, with appropriate letters, had been sent to the Duchess of Devonshire, Sir Bland Burgess, Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, and two or three others. He had dictated all the other letters, he declared, while Wordsworth wrote the one to Mr. Fox. "I have had that letter transcribed for you," he adds, "for its excellence, and mine to Wilberforce, because the two contain a good view of our notions and motives, poetical and political."*

No comment on the poems of the second volume could disclose the poet's purpose so well as his own account of "Michael," in a letter to Poole, dated April 9.

"In the last poem of my 2nd volume," he says, "I have attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart—the parental affection, and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence. This poem has, I know, drawn tears from the eyes of more than one—persons well acquainted with the manners of the 'Statesmen,' as they are called, of this country; and, moreover, persons who never wept in reading verse before."

He is anxious, he says, to know the effect of the poem on Poole, who himself possesses an inherited estate and is familiar with the language, manners, and feeling, of the middle order of people who dwell in the country. "Perhaps in England there is no more competent judge than you must be of the skill and knowledge with which my pictures are drawn. I had a still further wish that this poem should please you, because in writing it I had your character often before my eyes, and sometimes thought I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been under the same circumstances."†

* "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 27. † *Ibid.*, 54.

This revelation of Wordsworth's concern for the maintenance and spread of the happiness based on the ownership of small homes helps us to understand his alarm at the growth of industrialism. He saw that under the guise of what were then called liberal ideas, powerful political forces, in alliance with business interests, were luring the rural population of England into manufacturing towns, breaking up families and home ties, turning independent workers into mill "hands," changing the face of the country, cheapening life, and diminishing happiness. This explains much in his political philosophy which later appeared to be reactionary. It explains much of his future distrust of what younger or shallower men deemed progress, and it is perfectly in harmony with his Revolutionary zeal of former years.

No one has ever sufficiently pointed out how much solicitude considerations of this kind caused in the hearts of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Poole. To understand Wordsworth's poetry, it is absolutely necessary that his views on this subject should be taken into account. They were the outgrowth of close observation and anxious sympathy. He may have been lacking in those outstanding qualities which enable some men to mix freely with persons of inferior education and humbler station. Such persons perhaps never realized that he appreciated and loved them. But to a very large extent he lived for them. We have only to think of Goethe, his purely intellectual and æsthetic interests, his careful system of self-protection, his aristocratic exclusiveness, to perceive that, in comparison with him, Wordsworth was the true philanthropist. Yet Goethe, in a condescending hour, would probably have "got on better" with humble people, and appeared more genial than Wordsworth. Coleridge shared his friend's anxiety. Lacking Wordsworth's consistency and self-restraint, however, he gave way to his impatience in terms for which even Poole, with his advanced ideas, reproved him. Coleridge replied rather testily in a letter of October 5: "I own I have formed long and meditative

habits of aversion to the Rich, love to the Poor or the *un*wealthy, and belief in the excessive evils arising from Property. How is it *possible*, Poole, that you can have all these feelings ?"* We may be sure that these topics formed a frequent subject of conversation at Town-end.

Wordsworth has often been blamed for taking himself seriously and appreciating his own poetry at its full value. Very great and very little men are the ones to give offence by taking themselves seriously, and the objection might be summarily dismissed by asking whether Wordsworth was not, then, a very great man. And foreseeing in his poetry the excellence which wise readers have more and more come to see in it, we can only praise his critical vision. Yet we may easily excuse even good judges of poetry and some of his best friends for being stunned by the calm assurance, not obtrusive, yet absolutely unyielding, with which he gave them to understand that he knew how great he was. If he had been in London during 1801 to hear the criticisms passed upon his poems, he would no doubt have replied earnestly and haughtily; the number of anecdotes about his self-esteem would have been even larger than it is. Even only a year later, his reputation was somewhat established, and he ran less risk of hearing absurdly unintelligent judgments. These reflections, and, it must be admitted, a wish that he might have had a lighter touch in referring to himself—just so much tact as should not have been inconsistent with sincerity—come to one who reads Charles Lamb's letter to him, dated by Mr. Lucas January 30, 1801,† and Lamb's comments to his friend Manning on his letters from Wordsworth in that year. Lamb thought Wordsworth vain and pompous in his remarks about "Lyrical Ballads." What seemed to him most ridiculous was the poet's eagerness to know his opinion of the book, taken in connection with what appeared to be an effort at lofty indifference.

It must be admitted that Wordsworth's letters made

* "Thomas Poole and his Friends," II. 69.

† E. V. Lucas, "The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb," VI., pp. 208, 212, and 215.

him fair game for Lamb's sarcasm, but, on the other hand, Lamb would have overlooked Wordsworth's weakness had he at that time appreciated the poems. Lamb's letters are in his liveliest manner. If he shows himself less kindly than usual, it is probably because the provocation was really too much. Unfortunately they cannot be reprinted here. He praises certain lines and more than one delicate touch, but shows no sign of being impressed with the sincerity and simplicity of the general treatment. He makes a remark which even the most enthusiastic lovers of Wordsworth's poetry have generally found applicable—namely, that sometimes "the instructions conveyed in it are too direct and like a lecture." He was referring to "The Old Cumberland Beggar," but the criticism might be extended. He wishes the critical preface had appeared in a separate treatise, and for the good reason that it gives to the poems an appearance of "having been written for Experiment on the public taste, more than having sprung (as they must have done) from living and daily circumstances." Referring to an invitation to Grasmere, he says: "With you and your Sister I could gang anywhere. But I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a Journey. Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life." And then follows a brilliant description of the street-life of London, concluding with the challenge:

"Have I not enough without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know that the Mind will make friends of anything. Your sun and moon and skys and hills and lakes affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof, beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind, and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the Beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called; so ever fresh and

green and warm are all the inventions of men and assemblies of men in this great city."

We can form an idea of Wordsworth's reply only from Lamb's merry references to it in a letter to Manning, but it was no doubt very solemn. Coleridge, too, he says, who had not written to him for months, started from his bed of sickness to reprove him for his hardy presumption.

When once this bad beginning was over, the poems won their way into Lamb's heart of hearts, in spite of his professed dislike for the country and, what was more formidable, his taste for romance, for the quaint, the curious, the unusual, in phraseology and feeling. And, of course, there were no dregs of personal ill-will. Lamb continued to think, as he had said to Lloyd the year before, that such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth " would exclude solitude in the Hebrides or Thule."

It will be well at this point to consider, in connection with one another, the Prefaces to the different editions of " Lyrical Ballads," and certain letters which passed between the poet and John Wilson (Christopher North), at that time a student in Glasgow University. The Preface of 1798 began with a bold challenge:

" It is the honourable characteristic of poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind. The evidence of this fact is to be sought, not in the writings of Critics, but in those of Poets themselves. The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure. Readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will perhaps frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. It is desirable that such readers, for their own sakes, should not suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed mean-

ing, to stand in the way of their gratification; but that, while they are perusing this book, they should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favourable to the author's wishes, that they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision."

Fault was found with "We are Seven" and "Anecdote for Fathers," on the ground that the incidents they recorded were insignificant; with "Simon Lee" for the simplicity of its language; with "The Idiot Boy" because its subject was strange and supposedly not capable of imparting pleasure. Readers accustomed to what Tolstoi calls "esoteric" art—that is, art for which a special and unnatural taste has had to be fostered—were inclined to call the whole collection "disgusting." Some were repelled by the "lowness" of the characters; it was thought paradoxical to attribute fineness of feeling or heroic strength of passion to persons of humble rank. These objections, combining in varying proportions, were urged by Wordsworth's friends, and were stated, as we have seen, in the reviews. Wordsworth's convictions were not shaken nor was his courage abated by these unfavourable judgments. But he learned that it was necessary to educate the public, not merely by example, but by precept, and that it would be well to set forth his literary principles much more elaborately than he had done before. With severe toil he produced a second Preface, more than twelve times as long as the first. In this he advanced what almost amounts to a systematic theory of poetic art. It is certainly, with the possible exception of Sidney's "Defence of Poesie," the most eloquent, as it is without rival the most weighty, treatise on the subject in our language. Although the specific application of his views makes the work here and there, and particularly in the latter part, appear less general than if they had been embodied in a formal essay, there is really no lack of largeness. The Preface is much more than an introduction to "Lyrical Ballads,"

It is an exposition of the fundamental laws of association as applied in poetry. It announces not only Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, though that would be a notable performance, for Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction has given a fresh texture to nearly all English poetry for the last hundred years; but it heralds one of the most splendid triumphs of democracy. Wordsworth vindicated a levelling-up process in two particulars: the choice of language and the choice of subjects. When the poems and the prefaces were new, they seemed startling innovations; we have grown so accustomed to their results that now they do not sufficiently impress us. We fail to take them quite seriously, as they were intended to be taken. Yet the theory is scarcely to be distinguished from Tolstoi's, and its most complete illustration is to be found in " Leaves of Grass."

Wordsworth was not the man to abandon a position because it was attacked. But he recognized, and probably was persuaded by Coleridge, that his phrase about " the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society " needed to be considerably modified. Accordingly, in the first paragraph of the second Preface, he makes a more accurate statement:

" The first volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart."

Here is, of course, an immense difference. The validity of the earlier statement could have been disproved from the poems themselves. The latter statement accurately describes the language of the best poetry in all ages. Neither Wordsworth nor Tolstoi calls for a new kind of poetry. They distinguish universal art, which interprets the deep experiences common to mankind in terms commonly understood, from esoteric and decadent art, which is limited in its source, its medium,

and its appeal. Yet so corrupted had the taste of many readers of poetry become, that the fit audience were very few.

It has been taken for granted generally that the taste for English poetry was peculiarly depraved in the eighteenth century. I doubt if it is not still and has not always been the case, that simplicity and realism shock before they please those persons who have received the sort of education that removes them, in knowledge, from the mass of their fellow-men. Certain influences had been at work since the time of Shakespeare to widen this gap. The Anglican clergy had been drawn increasingly from the upper classes, and educated at the universities to an extent unknown in pre-Reformation times. A certain tincture of classical learning had become one of the pretensions of the masters of the land. The universities themselves had lost touch with actuality by giving up in large measure the practical side of their work. Since the Middle Ages, they had been frequented, in increased proportion, by men with no professional career in view, whose object in attending them was to obtain general culture or social polish. This is not to say that the culture and polish were not real, or that the spreading of literary taste among the upper classes was not extremely valuable to the nation. But the taste was for qualities beyond the scope of readers not thus trained and privileged. It preferred the antique to the modern, perhaps justly, but with exaggeration of the difference between them, and so blandly and complacently as to make innovation appear impudent. Classicism means the establishment of standards. The standard of poetic diction had been profoundly and unfortunately modified by a caste. Wordsworth realized this, and knew that his appreciative readers would be those few persons among the educated who were original enough to read with their own eyes. "I had formed," he says in the second Preface, "no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of these Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure:

and, on the other hand, I was well aware that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please." He declines to undertake a systematic defence of the theory upon which the poems were written, but admits that " there would be something like impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed."

The general opinion no doubt was, and perhaps on a lower plane still is, that poetry is an art of decoration, that poetry adds something to nature by way of improvement. The idea was well expressed by Cowper in his " Tyrocinium," where, speaking of the soul of man, he says:

> For her the Fancy, roving unconfined,
> The present Muse of every pensive mind,
> Works magic wonders, adds a brighter hue
> To Nature's scenes, than Nature ever knew.

He did not hesitate, therefore, to write of " feathered tribes domestic " when he meant hens. Nor did Thomson probably dream that he was not really complimenting nature when he wrote:

> Oh, stretched amid these orchards of the sun,
> Give me to drain the cocoa's milky bowl,
> And from the palm to draw its freshening wine,
> More bounteous far than all the frantic juice
> Which Bacchus pours.

A needle in Cowper's unroughened hands becomes " the threaded steel." A thick mist is a " frequent " mist, because in the Latin spices much poetry is embalmed. Thomson for the same reason treats us to " gelid " and " gravid " and " turgent." And it was no less authoritative a critic than Gray who wrote:

" The language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French, whose verse, where

the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost everyone that has written has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives—nay, sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespeare and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. . . . Our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible" ("On Poetic Diction," p. 121, edition of 1827).

A candid reader will not deny that most of the poems in the edition of 1800 agree very accurately with the following statement:

"The principal object proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement."

It is obvious at a glance that five different purposes are mentioned in this declaration. The connection between them is not so obvious. First we have the choice of incidents and situations. In making this choice from common life Wordsworth was, of course, doing only what English poets in every age had done, though few had done it so systematically. Then, the medium is to be a selection of the language really used by men, and such language is to be employed *throughout*; there are to be no deviations. The crude statement of the first Preface is here considerably modified, but the principle is unchanged. Commonness and reality are still the

essentials. But common life might be faithfully delineated in a selection of the language really used by men, and the result might have merely a scientific value; it might be devoid of every quality peculiar to poetry. This contingency is provided against by the faintly proffered proposal to throw over his subjects "a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." The subordinate place of this proposition and the curiously guarded way in which it is made show how tenacious Wordsworth was of his main purpose—to preserve reality. There is here no compromise with artificiality, with the fanciful, the romantic. "Ordinary things," not chimæras or fairies, not personifications, not even rarities of nature, are to be presented to the mind; and although the aspect shall be unusual, it shall not be unnatural. To perceive the naturalness of the unusual, and that ordinary things are always interesting, is the personal trait of a poet. If he would become an artist and make other men see with his eyes, he must rouse them by means of unusual cases. His own understanding of life would be almost as complete without these.

The relation of the unusual to poetic art was a subject that had been much discussed with Coleridge at Alfoxden. Wordsworth's own discovery and decision, as regards the choice of subjects from common life and the choice of language really used by men, were made by himself, before he met Coleridge. The vagueness and fluidity of the third phrase we are now discussing, the very words "certain" and "unusual," and "aspect," are Coleridgean. This part of the proposal takes us back to the day when the idea which bore fruit in "Lyrical Ballads," was first conceived. The poems were to be weird. At that point Wordsworth had yielded to the persuasive talk of his new friend. Left to his own impulses, he would not, at that time, have entertained such a plan. "The Idiot Boy" appears to me to have been composed in an effort to furnish a counterpart in weirdness to the "Ancient Mariner." Partly successful

as it is, in a curious and rare kind, it nevertheless proves that Wordsworth was happier in the search for unusual aspects of ordinary things when he made the effort in his own way and not in the manner so gloriously used by Coleridge. Another subject the friends had often discussed in Somersetshire was the possibility of giving in poetry something like a systematic illustration of mental science. Here again, of course, the influence of Coleridge predominated; and when Wordsworth, in the fourth part of this complex declaration, says that he proposes "to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature," we may feel sure that such an idea and such a formal expression of it would never have come to him had he not still been, in psychology, dependent upon Coleridge. Even with Wordsworth's psychological classification of his poems before us, with his emphatic distinction between imagination and fancy, we yet feel that there was something not spontaneous and natural about all this. Having once adopted, with Coleridge's assistance, a doctrinaire habit of classifying his impulses, he would be likely to turn it to great account and hold fast to it. Coleridge, on the other hand, might fail, years later, to recognize the child of his own fertile brain. Wordsworth developed the thought that lay in the word "primary," and for this the credit is fully his own.

One may or not may be disappointed in the search for a systematic illustration, in his poetry, of the qualities or functions of the mind; in one respect, however, the service has been very thoroughly rendered: Wordsworth distinguishes what is "primary" in human nature from what is not. He perceives what are "those first affections," both in time and strength, which underlie human feeling; he exalts them as no other poet ever has done. The fifth part of the proposal is even more doctrinal and Coleridgean than the fourth: the primary laws of our nature are to be traced "chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement." Yet it cannot be denied that

the theory is amply practised in such poems as "Ruth," "Lucy Gray," and "Michael." Poetry is full of illustrations of this principle; but where shall a more startling one be found than in these two stanzas?

> My horse moved on! hoof after hoof
> He raised, and never stopped:
> When down behind the cottage roof,
> At once, the bright moon dropped.
>
> What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
> Into a Lover's head!
> "O Mercy!" to myself I cried,
> "If Lucy should be dead!"

In this proposal no mention is made of verse, and, indeed, verse is treated in the whole composition as a subordinate feature. The author speaks with scorn of those poets who "separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites, of their own creation." To associate decadent art with its cause—*i.e.*, with the artist's estrangement from his fellow-men—was to anticipate Tolstoi in the central and most characteristic point of his teaching.

"All good poetry," Wordsworth continues, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling"; yet the greatest poets have been men who, "being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility," have thought long and deeply. Our thoughts are "the representatives of all our past feelings." These poems are distinguished, he says, from the poetry of the day by the fact that "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation," and not the reverse. He declares that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know that one being is elevated above another as he possesses this capability." As causes operating to blunt the sensibilities of men, he mentions the great national events which were then

taking place and the growth of cities. Men sought to relieve the monotony of their daily lives by reading accounts of extraordinary incidents, thus losing their taste for nature and literature. The secret of his style he sums up in a phrase, brief, exact, and comprehensive: "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject." This does not mean that he professed to pay no attention to style. He achieved style, and achieved it laboriously, by seeking a true and sufficient verbal representation of his subject. He deplores the separation between prose and metrical composition in so far as the so-called poetic diction has stood between writers and the realities they wished to express. The true distinction, he says, lies between poetry and matter of fact, or science, and not between poetry and prose. As he proceeds in his argument his high sense of the value of poetry discloses itself. The poet, he declares, is "a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

The poet, as Wordsworth conceives him, is not merely a passive instrument of nature. Not Wordsworth but Shelley it is who sings:

> Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is.

Memory trained to service, and an active power of sympathy, are parts of the poet's endowment. They do not require immediate external excitement, but can evoke things absent and conjure up passions resembling those produced by real events. Many philosophers have hesitated to admit that the giving of pleasure is the purpose of poetry. Wordsworth, it is surprising to observe, in spite of the ethical and in-

forming character of his own poetry, never questions this principle. The object of poetry, he says, is truth, but " the poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man." He extends the principle much further, lifting the hedonistic element above the mists and mire of selfishness and setting it upon a level where it is transformed into grateful submission to the law of happiness. Biological science is thus irradiated with mystical faith. " Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure," he says, " be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure." There is, he declares, an overbalance of enjoyment even in those sympathies which are excited by pain. And then, in a passage which is probably unsurpassed for its eloquence and its tone of triumph even by the noblest pages of Sidney or Milton, he exclaims:

" The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the counten-

ance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, 'that he looks before and after.' He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guide, yet he will follow whereso-ever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man."

Of all the famous interpretations of poetry, this surely is the largest in scope, the most philosophical, the most sympathetic. And as an example of English prose in the grand style, it is equal to the best of Hooker, Milton, Taylor, and Burke, and quite above the highest level of Dryden and Johnson. One ignorant of its date would hesitate to affirm that it was written in either the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. "Things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed"—this is speech of an older vintage, one would say, from which every trace of crudeness, every local taint, everything but what is perfect and immortal, has been removed by "the unimaginable touch of time." But the spirit of the passage is modern. Its recognition of science as the basis of poetry is more than modern; it is prophetic. And so, too, is the perception that the poet carries "everywhere with him relationship and love." We have here, on the one hand, the austere intellectual principle which saved Wordsworth himself from Romanticism, and may yet save the world from the superficial and unreal view of life and art which Romanticism has encouraged; and, on the other hand, a truly religious conception of human solidarity.

Passing over an important defence of the use of verse in writing poetry, we find Wordsworth plunging again

into the deeper parts of his subject. Poetry, he tells us, "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." It is thus possible, even when the original sensations were painful, to hold in mind and reproduce creatively only such emotions as will give us an "overbalance of pleasure." He meets the banal objection that had been raised and always will be raised against some of his poems by admitting frankly that his method may sometimes have made it easy for him to give a false importance to matters of particular rather than general interest, and that thus he may have written upon unworthy subjects. He is more apprehensive that his language "may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself." "Hence," he says, "I have no doubt that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic." With characteristic obstinacy, he argues that it would be unwise to attempt to alter these expressions.

It is appropriate to consider at this point a supplementary statement which Wordsworth added to the Preface for the next edition of "Lyrical Ballads" in 1802. He attributes the use of the so-called poetic diction to the vanity of poets, and especially of poor poets, and to the artificial expectation of readers, who have been led to associate such language with passion and the pleasure derived from passionate expressions. "A language," he declares, "was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men, *in any situation*." He denounces the abuse of the "pathetic fallacy," by which human feelings are attributed to inanimate objects, and sturdily maintains that in works of imagination and sentiment, "in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they require and exact one and the same language." He agrees with Sir Philip Sidney in holding that "metre is but adventitious to composition, and the phraseology for which that pass-

port is necessary, even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious."

John Wilson (Christopher North) was in 1802 a student at Glasgow University. Although only seventeen years old, he took a keen interest in intellectual questions. He was one of the first to see the importance of "Lyrical Ballads," and on May 24, 1802, wrote Wordsworth a long letter,* inspired by reverence for his genius and modest questioning as to some of his methods. "That your poetry is the language of Nature," he says, "in my opinion admits of no doubt. Both the thoughts and expressions may be tried by that standard. You have seized upon those feelings that most deeply interest the heart, and that also come within the sphere of common observation. You do not write merely for the pleasure of philosophers and men of improved taste, but for all who think—for all who feel." He praises the poet, in rapturous terms, for his discovery of the "wonderful effect which the appearances of external nature have upon the mind when in a state of strong feeling." Admitting that he was at first incredulous as to the effect of landscape upon human character, he says that upon further consideration this theory has captivated him, and he runs ahead, in eager schoolboy fashion, to surmise that "it serves to explain those diversities in the structure of the mind which have baffled all the ingenuity of philosophers to account for." He begs the poet to confer with him in some broad consideration of this sort. Then he frankly protests that some of Wordsworth's subjects are too particular; they cover events which would have been of no consequence to an unconcerned spectator. It is improper, he thinks, to describe these in poetry. The instance he cites is, of course, "The Idiot Boy."

Although coming from a stranger and evidently from a youth, this letter was so penetrating that Wordsworth felt obliged to answer it seriously and at considerable length. As an apology for not going into even greater detail, he mentions that curious nervous affection which

* See Mrs. Gordon's "Memoir of John Wilson," p. 26.

made the physical act of writing difficult for him: "There is scarcely any part of your letter that does not deserve particular notice; but partly from some constitutional infirmities, and partly from certain habits of mind, I do not write any letters except upon business, not even to my dearest friends. Except during absence from my own family, I have not written five letters of friendship during the last five years." He enters minutely into the question of the influence of external nature upon human character, declaring this influence to be very general, though more marked in some regions than in others, and requiring for its most powerful effects "a peculiar sensibility of original organization combining with moral accidents, as is exhibited in The Brothers and Ruth." But he does not flinch from his original statement that the impression of external nature is felt by all human beings: "How dead soever many full-grown men may outwardly seem to these things, all are more or less affected by them; and in childhood, in the first practice and exercise of their senses, they must have been not the nourishers merely, but often the fathers of their passions." This effect is shown, not in individuals merely, but upon the national character of small homogeneous peoples "in tracts of country where images of danger, melancholy, grandeur, or loveliness, softness, and ease prevail." Wordsworth is here attempting to give scientific expression to a popular opinion which has been greatly misused by poets, novelists, and biographers.* It is a theory which appears as if it could not stand a careful test. If Switzerland, we say to ourselves, had always been inhabited by Dutchmen, their steadfastness would no doubt be attributed to the inspiration of the impregnable peaks amid which they dwelt. We derive most of our ideas about national character from imaginative literature, which has been too often coloured by this very prepossession, so that its testimony is suspicious. Scott in particular fairly made sport with popular judgments by

* For instance, by Taine, in his "History of English Literature" and his "Life of La Fontaine."

representing so many of his countrymen as the hardy nurslings of mountain, crag, and torrent. It is singular that this influence should have generally confined itself to the male sex, or have produced in women the opposite effect to that produced in men, for most of his Scottish heroines are remarkable for gentleness rather than austerity. One may well hesitate to protest against even the fullest expansion of an idea so fundamental to Wordsworth's philosophy and so beautifully exemplified in his poetry, especially as there is scarcely an imaginative writer in any literature from whom further illustrations might not be drawn; but surely there is such a thing as what we might call " the scenic fallacy."

The inquiry should be based upon the testimony, not only of imaginative writers, who are likely to be peculiarly subject to this fallacy, but upon the events of history, upon observation, upon a survey of the arts and industries, the military and civic performances, the domestic traits, and the languages of various peoples. We children of the nineteenth century like to feel that—

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.

We hold in high esteem the doctrine of inherent qualities, and explain them, if need be, by reference to heredity. Yet perhaps Wordsworth proved himself an acute observer and a true philosopher, by emphasizing the effect of environment. It is at least more encouraging to suppose, with him and other faithful children of the eighteenth century, that impressions from outside are more potent than heredity. This theory brings hope of unlimited improvement, of improvement for a far larger number of human beings than those whom heredity can save. Granting that external natural objects affect human character at all, it is evident, from the constant presence of such objects, that if a race remains for many generations under their influence, the effect must show itself. Other things may pass away—economic arrangements, religious beliefs, culture, government, and all—but mountains will still lift up

the hearts of men and draw forth their thoughts, however insensibly. Wordsworth's view was profoundly philosophical. The philosophy was, even in this particular instance, that of the Enlightenment. It contained encouragement for those who believed that humanity could be indefinitely improved through changes from without. And at the back of this active faith lay an assurance that man himself, the object of this process, was fit for development, was essentially perfectible.

There is nowhere in Wordsworth's prose writings a plainer expression of his democratic principles than the part of his letter to Wilson which deals with that young man's objections to "The Idiot Boy." It occurs in a passage so weighty with disregarded truth that it should be carefully read. Moreover, it is pleasant to think of Wordsworth unbosoming himself so modestly and yet so confidently to his unknown correspondent, and in terms so eloquent:

"You begin what you say upon 'The Idiot Boy' with this observation, that nothing is a fit subject for poetry which does not please. But here follows a question, Does not please whom? Some have little knowledge of natural imagery of any kind, and, of course, little relish for it; some are disgusted with the very mention of the words pastoral poetry, sheep or shepherds; some cannot tolerate a ghost or any supernatural agency in it; others would shrink from an animated description of the pleasures of love, as from a thing carnal and libidinous; some cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions in society, because their vanity and self-love tell them that these belong only to themselves and men like themselves in dress, station, and way of life; others are disgusted with the naked language of some of the most interesting passions of men, because either it is indelicate, or gross, or vulgar; as many fine ladies could not bear certain expressions in 'The Mother' and 'The Thorn,' and, as in the instance of Adam Smith, who, we are told, could not endure the ballad of 'Clym of the Clough,' because the author had not written like a gentleman. Then there are professional and national prejudices for evermore. Some take no interest in the description of a passion or

quality, as love of solitariness, we will say, genial activi
of fancy, love of nature, religion, and so forth, becau
they have little or nothing of it in themselves; and
on without end. I return then to the question, Plea
whom? or what? I answer, human nature as it h
been and ever will be. But where are we to find t
best measure of this? I answer, from within; l
stripping our own hearts naked, and by looking out
ourselves towards men who lead the simplest lives ar
most according to nature; men who have never knov
false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, fal
criticisms, effeminate habits of thinking and feeling,
who, having known these things, have outgrown ther
This latter class is the most to be depended upon, b
it is very small in number. People in our rank in li
are perpetually falling into one sad mistake, namel
that of supposing that human nature and the perso
they associate with are one and the same thing. Who
do we generally associate with? Gentlemen, persons
fortune, professional men, ladies, persons who can affor
to buy, or can easily procure books of half-a-guine
price, hot-pressed, and printed upon superfine pape
These persons are, it is true, a part of human natur
but we err lamentably if we suppose them to be fa
representatives of the vast mass of human existenc
And yet few ever consider books but with reference t
their power of pleasing these persons and men of
higher rank; few descend lower, among cottages an
fields, and among children. A man must have don
this habitually before his judgment upon 'The Idi
Boy' would be in any way decisive with me. I *kno*
I have done this myself habitually; I wrote the poe
with exceeding delight and pleasure, and whenever
read it I read it with pleasure."

Some idea of the seclusion in which the poet live
may be gathered from a letter to Francis Wranghan
written early in 1801,* in which he remarks that he h
not yet seen the second volume of "Lyrical Ballads,
although it has been out a month. "We live," he say
"quite out of the way of new books. I have not see
a single one since I came here, now thirteen month
ago." He excuses himself for not going to visit h
friend at his parsonage at Hunmanby in Yorkshir

* "Letters of the Wordsworth Family," I. 140.

because he is not strong enough to walk, and too poor to ride. Hunmanby is not far from Gallow Hill, where he and his brother John had spent three weeks with Mr. Hutchinson, their farmer friend. "Mr. Hutchinson's house," he adds, "is kept by his sister, a woman who is a very particular friend both of my sister and myself. If ever you go that way it would be a great kindness done to me if you would call on them, and also at any future period render them any service in your power: I mean as to lending Miss Hutchinson books, or when you become acquainted with them, performing them any little service, *auprès de Monsieur ou Madame Langley* [Mr. Langley was Mr. Hutchinson's landlord] with respect to their farm. Miss Hutchinson I can recommend to you as a most amiable and good creature, with whom you could converse with great pleasure."

END OF VOL. I.

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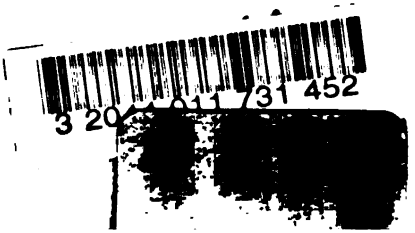
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